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ANATOL: LIVING HOURS
THE GREEN COCKATOO

BY ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

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INTRODUCTION BY ASHLEY DUKES



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INTRODUCTION

The Austrian and the German drama are often confused. In reality, they have nothing in common but language, and the difference between them may be measured by the difference between the spirit of Berlin and the spirit of Vienna. The German playwrights reflect phases of their national temperament clearly enough. Sudermann, for example, is always heavily Prussian. The stucco palace of *Die Ehre* and *Sodoms Ende* belong essentially to upper middle-class Berlin; the farms and country houses of *Johannisfeuer* and *Das Glück im Winkel* are as distinctively North German as their pastors are Protestant. Hauptmann's legendary plays are built of German mythology, and even his Silesian peasant dramas gravitate naturally towards the Northern capital. Wedekind's laborious introspection and substantial satire are German to the core.

Schnitzler is just as distinctively Austrian. Dramatically, Berlin belongs to the bourgeoisie; Vienna is a city of the aristocrats. Schnitzler, like most of the modern Viennese playwrights is content to take as his theme only a few scenes from life, and even in those few scenes he recurs continually to a single passage. No wind instruments for him; he is a master of the strings. To the Northern playwrights he leaves the wild barbaric march, to the Maeterlinckian symbolists the tone-poem. His dramatic method is the intellectualization, the refinement of the Viennese waltz. The most famous of his plays is *Liebelei* (in the English version *Flirtation*). But in reality they are all *Liebelei*, from *Anatol* to the *Komtesse Mizzi*. The moralist will find "flirtation" a euphemism, but Schnitzler has nothing to do with moralists or moral-

ity. His subject is always the same—the lover and a mistress or two. It is treated gracefully enough, with little passion and much gentle melancholy, little humor and much wit. His power lies chiefly in the creation of an atmosphere—a dim twilight atmosphere as of autumn evenings crowded with reminiscence. It is indescribably charming and completely aimless; a dream world as magical as that of any symbolists, yet unsymbolic. Tragic problems arise from time to time, as in *Der einsame Weg* or *Der Ruf des Lebens,* but for the most part Schnitzler moves upon the plane of comedy. The crisis arrives, the catastrophe occurs; but it is an intimately personal catastrophe, accepted with ironical resignation by the aristocrat-hero, and added with a sigh to his repertory of experience.

That aristocrat-hero is Schnitzler's most charming characteristic figure. "New mistresses for old" is his eternal problem, and an imp is ever at his elbow, whispering that the old were better. Still he must obey the law of his own nature, and he accepts the necessity of change as he accepts all else in his life, good-naturedly. The women come and go. They arrive timidly, half-conscious only of their power. They yield, and for a while some tiny raftered room with latticed windows, discreetly hidden in a narrow by-way of the city, is made the meeting-place. Freshly gathered flowers are arranged upon the table, set for two. The lamp is lit, the curtains are drawn. The old housekeeper, discreeter even than her dwelling, moves noiselessly to serve the dishes and withdraws. The two are left together; a gentleman of upper-class Vienna, a lady of any class, or none.

"We have seen this comedy before," you say at first. "It is sordid, sensuous, contemptible." It is none of these, for Schnitzler is a magician. An honorable magician, moreover. His work is never ugly. He avoids sensuality by his honesty as an artist. There is nothing unnatural, nothing immoral, nothing even furtive for him in the relationship of lover and mistress. A certain discretion is preserved—that is all. He traces the psychology of the intimacy. Within the limits he has chosen for

himself, he tells everything that can be told, and much that the lesser artist is afraid to tell. Details of circumstance are nothing to him, moods everything. His drama depends upon a crisis in the lives of two people; the inevitable passing from old relationships to new. No flash of thought escapes him. He records every motive. In the crisis itself there can be no compromise. The break must come when one of the lovers desires it, however faintly. As long as Romance spreads her wings, the intimacy lasts; the instant they are folded it must come to an end at whatever cost of suffering. That is the first condition of equality between men and women; a brutal condition, but one which must be faced. In the moment of parting pity is a dishonorable emotion, chivalry the grossest form of patronage, sentimentality a nauseous drug. Even the most cynical frankness is fairer, and that is Schnitzler's weapon.

He analyzes the transition moment in scenes such as those of *Anatol*. Outwardly, between the lovers, all is just as it was upon the first evening; inwardly everything is changed. The man must be free. Conversation grows lame. At last the explanation comes, and the woman departs; sometimes with frankly outstretched hand and a glance of understanding, sometimes helplessly in tears or riotously in a storm of indignation. For these latter types the man has only a shrug of the shoulders as he lights a cigarette. They offend his sense of decorum and compel him to regard them as inferiors. For the others he bears a touch of melancholy as a sign of mourning. He will think of them in future twilight moods. . . . But a few weeks later he will hire a new room in another by-way (not the same room, for that would be unbeautiful) for the reception of another mistress, and the old light o' love will pass to a new lover. There are the Schnitzler hero and the Schnitzler heroine. They have most of the vices of their city and the quintessence of its charm; frivolity tinged with regret and intrigue with grace.

I have touched here especially upon the types and the setting of the one-act cycle *Anatol* because they convey

the Schnitzler atmosphere most clearly. The situations are not literally rendered; they change just as moods change, and are woven into different forms. *Anatol* represents the comedy of the lover-mistress motive, *Liebelei* the tragedy. In the former the man is the central figure; in the latter the woman. In *Liebelei* Christine meets her philanderer, and makes a hero of him. She becomes his mistress, and lives on in a dream-world of her own. Her hero is killed in a duel fought on behalf of another woman—and that is all. Of Chrstine it can only be said that she is as great a woman as is possible in the Schnitzler world: a world devised for men as surely as that of Strindberg, and in effect, although unconsciously, as contemptuous of women. The misogynist, indeed, is a lesser enemy of feminism than the philanderer. He is only the mouthpiece of ideas, not the arbiter of fates.

Liebelei was followed by the longer plays *Freiwild* and *Das Vermächtnis*. They represent the nearest approach that Austrian drama has made to the social problem play and the modernity movement of other countries. In social problems, however, Schnitzler is really out of his element. He has satirized the duel a thousand times more subtly than Sudermann in *Die Ehre;* he has ridiculed militarism, semitism, and anti-semitism, the government and the revolutionary parties. But his interests are not primarily political or social, any more than they are domestic. In *Reigen* he returns to the drama of personal moods. *Anatol* consists of seven scenes, *Reigen* of ten, a complete cycle of duologues, each between a man and a woman. More than duologues, however: scenes from life. They pass consecutively: A prostitute and a soldier. The soldier and a parlormaid. The parlormaid and a young gentleman. The young gentleman and a young lady. The young lady and her husband. The husband and a girl. The girl and a poet. The poet and an actress. The actress and a nobleman. The nobleman and the prostitute.

There is the chain, stripped of the romance of *Anatol* and reduced to a vivisection of sex instinct, a post-mortem

examination of passion. It is the work of an artist weary of many adventures, and disposed to regard life as nothing but a round of stupid intrigue and cynical reaction.

For the rest, Schnitzler has gone no further dramatically than *Anatol* and *Liebelei*. The one-act cycles *Lebendige Stunden* and *Marionetten* are new versions of the old story. *Komtesse Mizzi* (1909) has all the old charm and nothing more. One can have too much of the twilight mood, the Viennese lover and his mistress, the melancholy and the grace. Everything that Schnitzler has written or imagined is summed up in the six hundred pages of his novel *Der Weg ins Freie*. There is the search for the "path of freedom" that he has never found. He has never made his way out of the half-world into the real world. But among the dramatists of the half-world he is supreme.

ASHLEY DUKES.

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Stately portals, tall yew hedges,
'Scutcheons, that have lost their gilding,
Sphinxes, gleaming through the thicket. . .
. . . Creaking gates that slowly open . . .
Where the cascades lie a-sleeping,
Where the Tritons lie a-sleeping,
Rococo, dust-decked and charming,
Canaletto's loved Vienna
Vienna sev'nteen hundred sixty.
. . . . Green and brown the silent lakelets,
Smooth and marble-white embordered,
In the Nixies' shining mirror
Play the gold and silver fishes. . . .
On the smooth and close-clipt grass-plots
Lie the graceful even shadows
Of the slender Oleanders:
Tree-tops bend to leafy arches
Branches cluster to a shelter
For the stately marble lovers,
Antique heroes and their ladies. . . .
Dolphins three the murmuring waters
Pour into a shell-shaped basin,
Fragrant blossoms from the chestnuts
Softly gliding, swirling downwards,
Float and drown there in the basin.
. . . From behind a wall of yew trees
Sound the clarionets and viols,
And it seems as if the graceful
Amorettes, these strains were playing,

INTRODUCTION

As they perch upon the terrace
Fiddling, winding wreaths of flowers,
Nestling close amid the garlands
Pouring from the marble vases,
Marigold, jasmine and lilac. . . .
And between them, on the terrace
Sit fair dames, coquet and smiling,
Monsignori, gay in purple,
In the grass before them lying,
On the steps and on the cushions,
Cavaliers and Abbés solemn.
Others aid still other fair ones
From their gay and perfumed Sedans.
. . . Sunbeams, peering through the tree-tops
Flickering, touch the golden tresses,
Glisten on the silken cushions,
Dance across the grass and gravel,
Dance across the rough-hewn lattice
Which we've thrown together lightly.
Vines and creepers climbing upwards
Veil and wreathe the slender rafters,
And between them, rich in color
Hang the tapestries and carpets,
Scenes of dalliance, bright and daring, . . .
Watteau's daintiest imag'nings
For our stage an arbor shady
Summer's sun instead of footlights,
Thus it is we play at acting,
Act the plays we have experienced,
Early ripe, in gentle sadness,
Our souls' comedy and drama,
Our emotions' Past and Present,
Dainty forms for naughty contents,
Polished words and gleaming pictures,
Feelings only half acknowledged,
Episodes and Dissolution . . .
Some will listen, others will not,
Some are dreaming, others laughing,
Some are eating ice,—and others
Whispering very tender secrets.

INTRODUCTION

In the breeze carnations swaying,
White carnations, tall and slender
Like a swarm of snowy night-moths.
And a tiny silken Spaniel
Barks his wonder at a peacock. . . .

LORIS.

QUESTIONING FATE

CHARACTERS

ANATOL

MAX

CORA

QUESTIONING FATE

Max. Really, Anatol, I envy you. (ANATOL *smiles*) Yes, I confess I was dumfounded. I've considered it all a sort of fairy tale until now. But now that I've actually seen you do it—when I saw that girl fall asleep—with my own eyes—saw her dance when you told her she belonged to the ballet—saw her weep when you told her her lover was dead—and saw her pardon a criminal when you had made a queen of her——

Anatol. Yes——

Max. There's a magician hidden in you.

Anatol. As there is in all of us.

Max. It's mysterious.

Anatol. It doesn't seem so to me—it's no more mysterious than life itself—no more mysterious than much we have discovered in the course of the centuries. How do you suppose our forefathers felt when they were told that the earth revolved on its axis? It must have made them dizzy.

Max. Yes—but that concerned all alike.

Anatol. Suppose we had just discovered Spring, for instance. We wouldn't believe it was true, in spite of the green trees, the blossoming flowers and—love.

Max. You're off the subject, all that is nonsense. But magnetism——

Anatol. Hypnotism——

Max. That is a different matter. I'd never let myself be hypnotized.

Anatol. That's childish of you. Where's the harm, if I were to tell you to go to sleep and you lie down quietly. . . .

Max. Yes, and then you'd say to me, "Now you're a chimney sweep" and I'd climb into the chimney and get all sooty.

Anatol. Those are only jokes. The important thing is its value for scientific use. But we've not gone far yet.

Max. Why?——

Anatol. Yes, I could transport that girl today into a hundred other worlds, but I can't transport myself even into one other world.

Max. Isn't it possible?

Anatol. To be honest, I've tried it. I've stared at this diamond in my ring for minutes together and I've said to myself, "Anatol, you will go to sleep and when you awake all thought of that woman, who is driving you crazy, will have vanished from your mind."

Max. And what happened when you woke up?

Anatol. I didn't go to sleep at all.

Max. That woman—that woman—then you still——

Anatol. Yes, friend, I'm very unhappy—I'm almost insane.

Max. You're still in doubt?

Anatol. No. Not in doubt—I *know* she deceives me. While her lips press mine, while her hand caresses my hair—in our moments of joy—I know she deceives me.

Max. It's all imagination.

Anatol. No, it isn't.

Max. Have you any proof?

Anatol. I surmise—I feel—that's why I know——

Max. Amazing logic!

Anatol. These women are always unfaithful—it comes natural to them. They aren't aware of it themselves. They simply have to have two or three affairs at the same time, just as I like to read two or three books at the same time.

Max. But she loves you——

Anatol. Madly—but what has that to do with it? She's untrue to me.

Max. With whom?

Anatol. How do I know? A prince, perhaps, who followed her in the streets—or a poet of the tenements who smiled at her, from a window as she passed in the early morning.

Max. You are a fool.

Anatol. What reason would she have for not being untrue to me? She's like all the rest, she loves life and does little thinking. If I ask her "Do you love me?" she'll answer yes, and she'll tell the truth. If I ask her "Are you true to me?" again she will say yes and again she will be telling the truth, for she has forgotten the others—for the moment at least. And then, did any one of them ever answer, "Dearest, I have been untrue to you?" How shall we ever know? But if she *is* true to me——

Max. Ah, ha——

Anatol. It's mere chance. It isn't because she thinks to herself, "I must be true to my dear Anatol"—that isn't it——

Max. But if she loves you?

Anatol. Sweet innocent!—if that were any reason——

Max. Well?

Anatol. Why shouldn't I be true to her? I love her.

Max. Oh, you're a man.

Anatol. That stupid old phrase! They're always trying to persuade us that women are different. Some may be—if their mothers keep them locked up or if they're cold-blooded—we're all alike, I tell you. When I say to a woman "I love you and you alone" I don't feel that I'm lying to her even if I have held another in my arms the night before.

Max. Oh, well—you——

Anatol. And how about you? Or my adored Cora? Oh, it will drive me mad! If I should kneel to her and implore her, "Sweetheart—darling—all is forgiven in advance—but only tell me the truth," would that help me? She would lie to me as before and I would know as much as I did before. Haven't I had them implore me, "Tell me, are you really true to me? Not a word of reproach if you're not—but I want the truth—I must know it," and what did I do? I lied,—calmly, with a happy smile—with the clearest conscience in the world. Why should I make her unhappy? And I replied, "Yes,

my angel,—faithful unto death," and she believed and was happy.

Max. There, you see——

Anatol. But I don't believe and I'm not happy. I might be, if there was any means of making them speak—these stupid, adorable, detestable creatures, or if there was any other way of discovering the truth. But there isn't any—except chance.

Max. And hypnotism?

Anatol. What?

Max. Hypnotism. I mean, you put her to sleep and then you say to her, "Now you must tell me the truth."

Anatol. Strange——

Max. It ought to be possible. And then you ask her, "Do you love me? Or someone else? Where have you been? Where are you going? Who is the other man?" and so on.

Anatol. Max—Max——

Max. Well?

Anatol. You're right. One might be a magician—and conjure a word of truth from a woman's mouth.

Max. There now—that'll save your life! Cora is undoubtedly a good medium—you will know this very evening whether you are a dupe,—or——

Anatol. Or a very god. Max, let me embrace you!—I am free—I am a new man. I have her in my power.

Max. I'm really quite curious.

Anatol. What? You didn't doubt?

Max. Oh, I see—others mustn't doubt, only you.

Anatol. Certainly. If a husband were leaving the very house where he had caught his wife with her lover, and a friend met him with the words, "I believe your wife is unfaithful," he wouldn't answer, "I've just become convinced of that," would he? He'd be more likely to say, "You're a damned cad."

Max. That's true—I had forgotten that it's the first duty of friendship to preserve a friend's illusions.

Anatol. Quiet a moment——

Max. What is it?

Anatol. Don't you hear? I know her step, even down there in the house-corridor.

Max. I didn't hear anything.

Anatol. So near—now she's in the hall—(*Opens the door*) Cora——

Cora (*outside*). Good evening; oh—you're not alone?

Anatol. It's only friend Max.

Cora (*coming in*). Good evening—all in the dark?

Anatol. It's still twilight—you know how I love that.

Cora (*stroking his hair*). My little poet——

Anatol. My dear Cora——

Cora. But I'll light the light, if you don't mind. (*She lights the candles*)

Anatol (*to* MAX). Isn't she charming?

Max. Oh——

Cora. How are you both,—have you been chatting here long?

Anatol. About half an hour.

Cora. And what about? (*Takes off her hat and coat*)

Anatol. Many things——

Max. Chiefly about hypnotism.

Cora. That hypnotism again? It makes me dizzy just to think of it.

Anatol. Well, now——

Cora. Anatol, I'd like to have you hypnotize me some time.

Anatol. I?—hypnotize you?

Cora. I think it would be awfully nice—that is, if *you* do it.

Anatol. Thanks.

Cora. But I wouldn't let a stranger do it—oh, dear, no.

Anatol. Well, sweetheart, I'll hypnotize you if you wish it.

Cora. When?

Anatol. Now—at once—right here.

Cora. Good! What must I do?

Anatol. Just sit quietly in that chair and make up your mind to go to sleep.

Cora. It's made up.

Anatol. I'll stand here before you, you must look at me—well, look at me—I'll stroke your eyes and forehead . . . this way——

Cora. And what then?

Anatol. Nothing—you must will to go to sleep——

Cora. When you touch my eyes like that, I feel queer——

Anatol. Quiet now, don't talk—sleep—you are very tired.

Cora. No, I'm not.

Anatol. Yes, you are tired.

Cora. A little—yes——

Anatol. Your eyelids are heavy—so heavy—you can scarcely lift your hands——

Cora (low). Yes—really——

Anatol (passes his hand over her eyes and forehead, speaks monotonously). Tired—you are very tired—go to sleep, my child—sleep—(*He turns with a triumphant expression to* MAX *who has been watching in admiration*) Sleep—now your eyes are tight shut, you can't open them—(*Cora tries to open her eyes*)—you can't—you are sleeping—sleep on——

Max. Say——

Anatol. Quiet!—(*To* CORA) You are sleeping—deeply—calmly—(*He stands looking at* CORA *who breathes calmly, evidently asleep*) Now you can speak.

Max. I wanted to ask if she was really asleep.

Anatol. You can see for yourself. Now we'll wait a few moments. (*He stands before her, looks at her, there is a long pause*) Cora—now you must answer me—answer—what is your name?

Cora. Cora.

Anatol. Cora, we are in the forest.

Cora. Oh, in the forest—isn't it lovely?—the green trees, . . . and the nightingales——

Anatol. Cora, you must tell me the truth about everything—what are you to do, Cora?

Cora. I must tell the truth.

Anatol. You must answer all my questions truth-

fully, and when you wake up you will have forgotten it all. Do you understand me?

Cora. Yes.

Anatol. Sleep now—calmly—(*To* MAX) Now I shall ask her——

Max. How old is she?

Anatol. Nineteen—Cora, how old are you?

Cora. Twenty-one.

Max. Aha!

Anatol. Hush—that's remarkable—you can see how——

Max. If she'd known she was such a good medium——!

Anatol. The suggestion is taking effect. I shall question her further. Cora, do you love me?

Cora. Yes.

Anatol (*triumphant*). Did you hear that?

Max. And now the main question—whether she is true to you.

Anatol. Cora—— (*Turning*) That's a stupid question.

Max. Why?

Anatol. You can't ask it that way—I must word the question differently.

Max. I should think it was sufficiently explicit.

Anatol. No, that's just the trouble, it is not explicit enough.

Max. In what way?

Anatol. If I ask, "Are you true to me," she may understand that in its widest significance.

Max. Well?

Anatol. She'll think back over her whole past—she'll think possibly of a time when she loved someone else, and she would answer no.

Max. That would be rather interesting, too.

Anatol. Thanks! I realize that Cora knew other men before she met me—she herself told me that had she dreamed she was to meet me—then——

Max. But she didn't dream it?

Anatol. No.

Max. As to your question——

Anatol. Yes, this question—it's too crude—in the wording, anyway.

Max. Then put it this way, "Cora, have you been true to me since you have known me?"

Anatol. Hm—that's better. (*To* CORA) Cora, have you been—but that's absurd, too.

Max. Absurd?

Anatol. Why, yes. Consider the way we met—we didn't dream we should come to love each other so madly. We both thought, those first days, that it was merely a passing episode—who knows——

Max. Who knows what?

Anatol. Who knows, if she did not first come to love me—when she had ceased to love someone else? What experience did this girl live through before I met her—before we exchanged our first words? Could she cut loose from it all at once? Did she not, perhaps, have to drag the old chains about with her, for days and weeks?——

Max. Hm. . . .

Anatol. I will go still further—at first it was only a caprice to her as it was to me. Neither of us thought of it as anything else, neither of us demanded anything from the other more than a sweet fleeting happiness. If she did wrong at that time—can I reproach her for it?

Max. How magnanimous you are.

Anatol. Oh, no—but I should consider it indecent to take any such advantage of the present situation.

Max. That's noble of you. But maybe I can help you out. (ANATOL *looks his question*) Why not put it this way, "Cora, have you been true to me since you have loved me?"

Anatol. That sounds quite clear.

Max. Well?

Anatol. But it isn't clear at all.

Max. Oh, indeed!

Anatol. True! What does that word mean, anyway? Now suppose, let us say—suppose she was in a railway train yesterday, and a man sitting opposite touched the

tip of her foot with his. It is not at all impossible that, with the greatly increased perceptiveness characteristic of sleep and in the highly sensitized condition of the medium's mind during the hypnosis——, it is not at all impossible that she might regard this incident as an infidelity.

Max. Oh, see here——

Anatol. All the more since she knows my—probably exaggerated point of view on this subject from many conversations we have had. I've said to her, "Cora, if you even look at another man it's an infidelity towards me."

Max. And she?

Anatol. She laughed and asked how I could believe that she would even look at another man.

Max. And yet you believed——

Anatol. Accidents can happen. Imagine—for instance, an impertinent fellow follows her some evening and kisses her on the neck.

Max. Well—that——

Anatol. Well, that's not impossible.

Max. Then you don't really want to question her?

Anatol. Why, yes—but——

Max. All this you've been saying is perfect rot. Believe me, women never misunderstand when we ask them if they've been true to us. And if you whisper to her, tenderly, affectionately, "Are you true to me?" she won't think of any man's foot or any impertinent kiss on the neck, she'll think of just what we usually mean when we talk of infidelity. And, besides, in this case, you have the added advantage of being able to ask further questions which will make her answer quite clear.

Anatol. Then you insist that I shall question her?

Max. I? Why, *you* wanted to know.——

Anatol. But I've just thought of something——

Max. What is it?

Anatol. The Unconscious.

Max. The Unconscious?

Anatol. I believe in states of unconsciousness——

Max. Do you?

Anatol. Such a condition can grow out of itself, as it were, but it can also be brought about by artificial means—by means that dull, or unduly exhilarate, the senses.

Max. Please explain.

Anatol. Imagine a dim room, full of shadows—mysterious——

Max. Dim—mysterious—I'm imagining it.

Anatol. And in this room—she—and another.

Max. But how did she get there?

Anatol. I'll leave that question open. There are excuses—enough that it could and does happen. And then—a few glasses of Rhine wine—the air strangely heavy—the scent of cigarettes—the fragrance of perfumed hangings—a pale light through frosted glass and red silk—silence—solitude—sweet whispered words—(*Gesture from* MAX)—many others have yielded there—stronger, calmer than she.

Max. Probably. Still the fact that she should be in such a room with another man doesn't quite agree with my idea of fidelity.

Anatol. Life is full of enigmas.

Max. Well, friend, you have the solution of one of those enigmas which have puzzled the most brilliant men for ages, in your own hands: you need only speak, and you will know all that you wish to know. One question—and you will know whether you are one of the few who are really loved exclusively—or you can learn who your rival is and how he won his victory over you—and yet you will not speak this word. You have been permitted to question Fate—and you will not. You torture yourself day and night, you'd give half your life for the truth, and yet when it lies before you, you will not stoop to pick it up. And why not? Because it might happen that a woman whom you love is really just as you would have her, in *all* your imaginings, and because your illusion is a thousand times dearer to you than the truth. Enough of this trifling now. Wake the girl up, and be satisfied with the proud consciousness that you—might have accomplished a miracle.

Anatol. Max!——

Max. Well, am I not right? Don't you know yourself that all you've said has been just sophistry, empty phrases, with which you can deceive neither yourself nor me.

Anatol (*quickly*). Max, I will question her.

Max. Ah ha!

Anatol. But—don't be offended—not in your presence.

Max. Not in my presence?

Anatol. If I must hear it—the worst—if she answers "I am not true to you," I want to be alone to hear it. To be unhappy is only half the misfortune—to be pitied—is misery complete. I cannot endure it. You are my best friend, but that is just why I don't want to see your eyes rest on me with that expression of pity which shows the unfortunate the full depth of his misery. It's something else, perhaps. I may be—ashamed—before you. You will have to learn the truth, for you will have seen this girl here for the last time, if she has deceived me. But I don't want you to hear it when I do—that's what I can't endure—do you understand?

Max. I understand. (*Presses his hand*) I will leave you alone with her.

Anatol. You are a real friend. (*Goes to door with him*) I'll call you in again—in less than a minute. (MAX *goes into next room*)

Anatol (*stands in front of* CORA, *looks at her*). Cora, —(*He shakes his head, paces the room, comes back to her, falls on his knees before her*) Cora—my sweet Cora—(*With decision*) Cora, wake up—and kiss me.

Cora (*rises, rubs her eyes, falls on* ANATOL'S *neck*). Anatol—how long did I sleep? Where is Max?

Anatol (*calls*). Max!

Max (*comes from next room*). Here I am.

Anatol (*to* CORA). You slept for a long time and you talked in your sleep.

Cora. Good heavens! Did I say anything wrong?

Max. You only answered his questions.

Cora. What did he ask me?

Anatol. Ever so many things.

Cora. And did I answer everything?

Anatol. Everything.

Cora. And mayn't I know what you asked me?

Anatol. No, you may not. And I'll hypnotize you again to-morrow.

Cora. No, indeed—never again. It's witchcraft—they ask you questions and then when you wake up you don't know a thing about it—I know I talked nonsense.

Anatol. Yes—for instance, you said that you loved me.

Cora. Did I, really?

Max. She doesn't believe it!—that's good.

Cora. But I don't need to go to sleep to tell you that.

Anatol. My angel. (*Embrace*)

Max. Good-bye, friends.

Anatol. You're going already?

Max. I must.

Anatol. You don't mind if I don't go with you?

Max. Why, of course not.

Cora. See you soon again?

Max (*at the door*). I've learned one fact—women can lie even in the hypnosis—but they're happy—that's the one important thing. Good-bye, children. (*They do not hear him, as they are clasped in a passionate embrace*)

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

CHARACTERS

Anatol

Gabrielle

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

It is about six o'clock on Christmas Eve, in the streets of Vienna. Snow is falling lightly.

Anatol. Dear lady—oh, dear lady——

Gabrielle. What?—oh, it's you?

Anatol. Yes, I've been following you. I can't bear to see you lugging all those things. Do give me your packages.

Gabrielle. Oh, no, much obliged—but I can carry them perfectly well myself.

Anatol. Please don't make it so hard for me when I really want to be gallant.

Gabrielle. Well—take this one, then.

Anatol. But that don't amount to anything—here, give me this—and this——

Gabrielle. That's enough now—you're really too kind.

Anatol. If only I'm allowed to be—it feels so good.

Gabrielle. But you prove that only on the street,—and when it's snowing——

Anatol. And when it's evening—and, incidentally, Christmas—eh?

Gabrielle. It's unusual even to catch a glimpse of you nowadays.

Anatol. You mean that I haven't called on you this season?

Gabrielle. Yes, that's about what I .mean.

Anatol. Oh, dear lady—I haven't made any calls at all, this season—how is your husband?—and the dear children?

Gabrielle. Spare yourself these inquiries. I know it interests you very little.

Anatol. It's quite a weird sensation to meet someone who really knows human nature.

Gabrielle. I know—*you.*

Anatol. Not as well as I could wish.

Gabrielle. No such remarks, please.

Anatol. But I can't help it.

Gabrielle. Then give me my packages.

Anatol. Don't be angry, please—I'll be good. (*They walk along in silence*)

Gabrielle. I don't mean that you sha'n't talk at all.

Anatol. But you're such a strict censor——

Gabrielle. Tell me something interesting. We haven't seen each other for so long. What are you doing with yourself?

Anatol. Nothing—as usual.

Gabrielle. Nothing?

Anatol. Absolutely nothing.

Gabrielle. It's really too bad.

Anatol. *You* certainly don't care.

Gabrielle. How can you say that?

Anatol. And why am I wasting my life? Whose fault is it? *Whose?*

Gabrielle. Give me my packages.

Anatol. I don't blame anyone in particular. I was just talking into the air——

Gabrielle. You do a lot of walking, I suppose.

Anatol. Walking? You put such a tone of contempt into that? And yet, is there anything nicer? The word suggests such delightful aimlessness. But it doesn't fit me to-day. I'm very busy to-day—just as you are.

Gabrielle. Busy? At what?

Anatol. I'm shopping for Christmas, too.

Gabrielle. You are?

Anatol. Only I can't find anything to suit me. For weeks now, I've spent my evenings in front of the shop windows in every street. But these shop-keepers seem to have neither taste nor originality.

Gabrielle. That's for the shopper to supply. Any-

body who has as little to do as you have, ought to be able to plan, and to exercise his own originality, and order his presents during the Autumn.

Anatol. I'm afraid I'm not the man to do that. And, anyhow, how do we know in the Autumn whom we want to give presents to at Christmas? So here it is,—only two hours before they light the candles on the Christmas tree, and I haven't the faintest idea—not the faintest——

Gabrielle. Shall I help you?

Anatol. Oh, dear lady—you are an angel!—but don't take the packages away from me.

Gabrielle. Why, no——

Anatol. Then I may call you an angel?—that's fine—angel!

Gabrielle. Will you be quiet?

Anatol. I'm as quiet as can be.

Gabrielle. Well, then, give me some guide—whom do you want the present for?

Anatol. That's—that's hard to say——

Gabrielle. For a lady, of course——

Anatol. I complimented you once this evening on your knowledge of human nature.

Gabrielle. But what—what sort of a lady? A real lady?

Anatol. We'll have to come to an agreement with regard to that term first. If you mean a lady of the great world—then it's not quite right.

Gabrielle. Very well—of the—of the "little world" then?

Anatol. We can call it that.

Gabrielle. I might have known it.

Anatol. Please don't be sarcastic.

Gabrielle. I know your taste—something from the other side of the City Line?—thin and blonde?

Anatol. Blonde—yes—I'll acknowledge that much.

Gabrielle. Blonde—it's surprising how faithful you are to this sort of maiden——

Anatol. It isn't *my* fault.

Gabrielle. None of that, sir! It's just as well that

you should stay by your particular type—it would be a great pity for you to desert the scene of your triumphs.

Anatol. But what can I do? It's the only place I'm loved—over there.

Gabrielle. Do they understand you—over there?

Anatol. Not in the slightest. But that's how it goes. In the "little world" I'm loved—in the great world—only understood. You know——

Gabrielle. No, I don't know anything—and I don't want to know anything more. Come here—this is the right shop—we'll buy something here for your little girl.

Anatol. Dear lady——

Gabrielle. Why, yes—look in here—there's a little fancy box with three bottles of perfume—and another with six cakes of soap—patchouli—chypre—Jockey Club—wouldn't that suit?

Anatol. That—that isn't altogether nice of you——

Gabrielle. Wait a moment—look at this pin with the six paste diamonds—*six*—just think!—how it glitters—or this charming little bracelet with those heavenly danglers—one of them is a Moor's head—that ought to please—across the City Line.

Anatol. You are mistaken, dear lady—you don't know these girls—they are—quite different from your idea.

Gabrielle. Oh, look here—how perfectly charming—what *do* you think of that hat? The shape was the latest thing—two years ago! And see those waving feathers—aren't they gorgeous? That would certainly make a sensation—in Hernals.

Anatol. But I wasn't talking of Hernals—and you probably underestimate the taste of Hernals, too.

Gabrielle. You're very difficult—why don't you help me? Give me some clue.

Anatol. How can I? You'd have only a condescending smile for it.

Gabrielle. Oh, no, oh, no—I want to learn. Is she vain? Or modest? Tall—or short? Does she like gay colors?

Anatol. I should not have accepted your kind offer —you're only mocking me.

Gabrielle. Oh, no, I'm listening—tell me something about her.

Anatol. I don't dare——

Gabrielle. You may dare. Since when——?

Anatol. Don't let's talk about it.

Gabrielle. But I insist. Since when have you known her?

Anatol. For some time.

Gabrielle. Don't let me drag it out of you like this. Tell me the whole story.

Anatol. There isn't any story.

Gabrielle. How you made her acquaintance—when, and where, and what sort of a person she is—I want to know all that.

Anatol. Oh, very well, but I warn you it's tiresome.

Gabrielle. It will be interesting to me. I'd really like to learn something about that world. What sort of a world is it anyway? I know nothing at all about it.

Anatol. You wouldn't understand that world at all.

Gabrielle. Oh, indeed!

Anatol. You have such a summary contempt for everything that lies outside your own circle. It's a mistake.

Gabrielle. I'm willing to learn. But no one ever tells me anything about that world. How shall I learn to know it?

Anatol. And yet—you have an indefinite feeling—that they're taking something away from you—over there. It's a sort of silent enmity.

Gabrielle. Oh, please—no one takes anything from me that I wish to keep.

Anatol. That may be—but even if you don't want it yourself—still it annoys you—when someone else takes it.

Gabrielle. Oh——

Anatol. Dear lady—that's typically feminine. And as it's typically feminine—it's probably highly refined and very beautiful and profound as well.

Gabrielle. Where did you learn that irony?

Anatol. Where did I learn it? I'll tell you. I was innocent once—and confiding, and there was no scorn in my words—and I bore many a wound in silence.

Gabrielle. Don't be romantic.

Anatol. I could bear honest wounds—I can overcome a "no" spoken at the right time, even by lips I love. But a "no"—when the eyes have said "perhaps" a hundred times—when the lips have smiled "it might be" a hundred times—when the tone of the voice vibrates a hundred promises—such a "no" must turn a man——

Gabrielle. But we were going to buy your present?

Anatol. ——must turn a man into a fool—or a cynic.

Gabrielle. You—you were going to—tell me——

Anatol. Yes—if you insist.

Gabrielle. I do. How did you make her acquaintance?

Anatol. Oh—in the usual way I suppose. The way those things happen—on the street—or at a dance—or in an omnibus—or maybe under an umbrella.

Gabrielle. But I'm interested in this special case—we're to buy something for this special case.

Anatol. There are no special cases in "the little world," nor in the great world either for that matter. You're all so true to type.

Gabrielle. Sir—now you're beginning——

Anatol. There's no insult in that—not in the slightest—I'm true to type myself.

Gabrielle. What type are you?

Anatol. Frivolous. Melancholiac.

Gabrielle. And I?——

Anatol. You—that's simple—mondaine.

Gabrielle. Indeed! And—and she——

Anatol. She—she's—the sweet little girl.

Gabrielle. Sweet—she's sweet then—and I—just—just mondaine?

Anatol. Cruel mondaine—if you insist.

Gabrielle. Very well. Now do finally tell me something about this—sweet little girl.

Anatol. She's not fascinatingly beautiful—she hasn't a particle of style—and she certainly is not brilliant.

Gabrielle. I don't want to know what she is *not*——

Anatol. But she has the soft charm of a spring evening—the grace of an enchanted princess—and the soul of a girl who knows how to love.

Gabrielle. That sort of soul is said to be very frequent in the "little world."

Anatol. You can't imagine what it is like there. They told you too little, when you were a young girl—and they've told you too much since you've been a young wife—that robs your opinions of spontaneity.

Gabrielle. But I tell you I'm willing to be taught—I'll believe in your enchanted princess. Tell me something of the magic garden in which she sleeps.

Anatol. Oh, you mustn't imagine any gorgeous drawing-room—with heavily hanging curtains—bric-a-brac—pale velvets—and the affected half-twilight of a dying afternoon——

Gabrielle. I don't want to hear what I must *not* imagine——

Anatol. Very well, then, imagine a little dim room, very small—with painted walls—in too light a tone—a few old engravings—poor ones—with faded lettering, here and there—a hanging lamp with a shade. And from the window, at evening, there is a view over roofs and chimneys sinking into the darkness. And when spring comes—the garden opposite will blossom and send out its fragrance——

Gabrielle. You *must* be happy—if you can think of May—at Christmas.

Anatol. Yes, I *am* happy—now and then.

Gabrielle. That will do,—it's growing late—we were to buy something for her—shall it be something for the room with the painted walls?

Anatol. The room lacks nothing.

Gabrielle. In *her* eyes—I can believe that. But I would like to dress up the room—to suit your taste.

Anatol. Mine?

Gabrielle. With Persian rugs.

Anatol. Out there?

Gabrielle. And a shade of frosted red-green glass——

Anatol. Hm——

Gabrielle. A few vases with fresh flowers——

Anatol. But I want to take *her* something.

Gabrielle. Yes, that's true—we must make our choice —she's waiting for you I suppose.

Anatol. Certainly.

Gabrielle. She's waiting. Tell me, how does she receive you?

Anatol. Oh, in the usual way.

Gabrielle. She hears your steps on the stair—doesn't she?

Anatol. Yes, sometimes.

Gabrielle. And she throws her arms around your neck—and kisses you—and what does she say?

Anatol. Oh, what one usually says in such cases.

Gabrielle. Well—for instance?

Anatol. I know of no particular instance.

Gabrielle. What did she say yesterday?

Anatol. Oh—nothing special—it would sound silly—if you didn't hear the tone in her voice.

Gabrielle. I'll try and imagine that tone. Well, what did she say?

Anatol. "I am so glad that I have you again."

Gabrielle. "I am so glad"—was that it?

Anatol. "That I have you again."

Gabrielle. That's very sweet—very sweet.

Anatol. Yes, it is sincere—and true——

Gabrielle. And she's always alone?—you can see each other undisturbed?

Anatol. Yes, she lives by herself—she's quite alone in the world—no father, no mother—not even an aunt.

Gabrielle. And you—are everything to her?

Anatol. Possibly—for the present. (*There is a pause*)

Gabrielle. It's growing late—see how empty the streets are.

Anatol. And I've been detaining you! You ought to get home I suppose.

Gabrielle. Yes—they'll be waiting for me. But what shall we do about the present?

Anatol. Oh—I'll find some trifle.

Gabrielle. I'm not so sure about that. And I had really made up my mind that I wanted to choose something for your—for that girl.

Anatol. Oh, really, dear lady——

Gabrielle. And I'd like most of all to be there when you bring her the present—I have the greatest desire to see that little room and the sweet little girl. She doesn't know how fortunate she is. (ANATOL *starts*) But give me my packages now, please. It's so late.

Anatol. Here they are—but——

Gabrielle. And please call up that cab there—the one coming down the street.

Anatol. Why this hurry—all of a sudden?

Gabrielle. Please do as I say. (*He beckons to the cab*) Thanks—but what shall we do about that present? (*The cab stops in front of them.* ANATOL *moves to open the door*)

Gabrielle. Wait a moment—I'd like to send her something myself.

Anatol. You—would?

Gabrielle. But what shall I?—here, take these flowers. Just these simple flowers—it's to be only a greeting—nothing more—but you must give her a message, too.

Anatol. This is very sweet of you.

Gabrielle. Promise me to give her the message?—in the very words in which I say it?

Anatol. Why, certainly.

Gabrielle. You'll promise me?

Anatol. With the greatest pleasure—why not?

Gabrielle (*opens the door of the cab*). Then tell her——

Anatol. What?

Gabrielle. Tell her "these flowers, my sweet little girl, were sent to you by a woman who, perhaps—might know how to love as well as you—but who hasn't the courage."

Anatol. Dear—lady—— (*She has entered the cab*

and it drives away. The streets are almost empty now. ANATOL *stands looking after the cab until it turns the corner. He stands for a moment or two longer, then looks at his watch and hurries away.)*

EPISODE

CHARACTERS

ANATOL

MAX

BIANCA

EPISODE

Max's *room, decorated in dark tones, dark red paper, dark red hangings. There is a door at back, center, another door on the left. A large desk stands in the center of the room, on it a lamp with a shade, books and papers. There is a tall window in the right wall, down front. A fireplace, in which a fire is burning, fills the slant corner of the right wall at back. Two low armchairs and a dark red screen stand before the fire.*

Max (*sits at the desk smoking a cigar and reading a letter*). "My dear Max. Here I am again. Our company will be in the city three months, I suppose you saw it in the paper. My first evening shall be given to friendship—I'll spend it with you. Bibi." Bibi—that means Bianca—very well, I'll be here. (*There is a knock at the door*) Already? Come in.

Anatol (*comes in with gloomy mien. He carries a large package under one arm*). Good evening.

Max. Hello—what have you there?

Anatol. I am seeking a refuge for my past.

Max. What do you mean?

Anatol (*holds out the package towards him*).

Max. What's that?

Anatol. It is my past I am bringing you here, my entire youth. Take it into your care.

Max. With pleasure. But won't you explain?

Anatol. May I sit down?

Max. Of course. Why are you so solemn?

Anatol (*sits down*). May I light a cigar?

Max. Take one of these, they are this season's vintage.

Anatol (*lights one of the cigars*). Ah——

Max (*pointing to the package which* Anatol *has laid on the desk*). And that?

Anatol. I have no place now for these memories of my youth—I am leaving town.

Max. Indeed!

Anatol. I am beginning a new life—indefinitely—I must be free and alone, and that is why I free myself from the past.

Max. Then you have a new love?

Anatol. No—but I no longer have the old love—that's all for the present. (*Interrupting himself and pointing to the package*) I can leave all this trash with you, can't I?

Max. You call it trash? Then why don't you burn it up?

Anatol. I can't.

Max. That's childish.

Anatol. No—it's my kind of constancy. I can't forget a single one of all those I have loved. When I turn over these notes, these flowers and these curls—you'll let me come here occasionally just to do it, won't you?—then I am with them all again, they are all alive, and I adore them as before.

Max. The idea being that you want to use my rooms as a meeting-place with your past loves?

Anatol (*scarcely hears him*). There's an idea comes to me now and then. Suppose there were some magic word that could force them all to appear—that could conjure them up out of Nothingness.

Max. It would be a rather variegated Nothingness.

Anatol. Yes—and imagine—if I should utter this word——

Max. You might find something effective—for instance—"my only love."

Anatol. Yes. Then I would call "My only love" and they would all come—one from a simple tenement home, another from her husband's gorgeous drawing-room, one from her stage dressing-room——

Max. Several.

Anatol. Very well—several—one from a milliner's shop——

Max. One from the arms of a new lover?

Anatol. One from the grave—one from here, another from there—until they are all come——

Max. Better not speak that word. It might be an awkward gathering. For while they may have all lost their love for you—not one of them has lost a sense of jealousy.

Anatol. That is very wise. Rest in peace, therefore.

Max. But now we must find a place for this stately package.

Anatol. You'll have to divide it up. (*He opens the package. Its contents are a number of tiny packets tied up in ribbons*)

Max. Oh!

Anatol. It's all neatly arranged here.

Max. By name?

Anatol. Oh, no. Each packet bears some inscription, a verse, just a word sometimes, or a sentence, which calls up the memory of each experience. There are no names, there might be several Maries or Annas, for instance.

Max. Let me see some of them.

Anatol. I wonder if I'll recognize them all? Some have been wrapped up for years. I haven't even looked at them.

Max (*takes up one of the little packages, reads the inscription*).

> "You are so fair, so sweet, so wild,
> I hold you close within my arm,
> I kiss your neck, alluring child,
> Matilda, of the subtle charm."

Why, here's a name—Matilda.

Anatol. Yes, but that wasn't her name—although I did kiss her neck.

Max. Who was she?

Anatol. Don't ask. She has lain in my arms, that is enough.

Max. Away with Matilda then. Her package is a very thin one.

Anatol. There's only a curl in it.

Max. No letters?

Anatol. Letters? From her? She would have had a hard struggle to write them. And, besides, where would we be if all women insisted on writing to us? Away with Matilda then.

Max (*reading as before*). "Women are all alike in one respect: they become impudent when you catch them in a lie."

Anatol. Yes, that is true.

Max. Who was she? This is a thick package.

Anatol. Lies, eight pages long, each time. Away with them.

Max. And she was impudent, too?

Anatol. Yes, when I found her out. Away with her.

Max. Away with the impudent liar.

Anatol. No insults, please. She has lain in my arms —she is sacred.

Max. Well, that's one reason. Here's the next. (*Reads as before*)

> "When I would send all ugly moods a-flying,
> I think of your betrothed, girlie mine,
> And then, my love, I laugh until I'm crying,
> There are some jokes that really are divine."

Anatol (*smiling*). Yes, she was—a joke and divine.

Max. And what's in here?

Anatol. Only a photograph—she and her betrothed.

Max. Did you know him?

Anatol. Surely, or I couldn't have laughed at him. He was a blockhead.

Max (*seriously*). He has lain in her arms—he is sacred.

Anatol. Enough of them.

Max (*taking a new package*). What's this—a sentence——

Anatol. What is it?

Max (*reads*). "She boxed my ears."

Anatol. Oh, yes—I remember.

Max. Was that the end?

Anatol. No, the beginning.

Max. I see. And here—"It's easier to change the direction of a flame, than to light it." What does that mean?

Anatol. Why—I changed the direction of the flame, another lit it.

Max. Away with the flame. (*Reads*) "She always brought her curling-iron." (*He looks inquiringly at* ANATOL)

Anatol. Why, yes, she always brought her curling-iron,—for any eventuality. She was very pretty. I have only a little piece of a veil to remember her by.

Max. Yes, that's what it feels like. (*Reading the next*) "How did I lose you?" Well, how *did* you lose her?

Anatol. That's just what I don't know. She was gone—suddenly gone out of my life. That happens sometimes. It's just as if you leave an umbrella somewhere and don't remember it for days afterwards, and then you can't remember where and when you left it.

Max. Farewell, lost one. (*Reads*) "You were a sweet and merry creature."

Anatol (*continues dreamily*). "Maiden with the well-pricked fingers."

Max. That was Cora, wasn't it?

Anatol. Yes—you knew her.

Max. Have you ever heard what's become of her?

Anatol. I met her just recently—as the wife of a cabinet-maker.

Max. Really?

Anatol. Yes, that's the usual fate of those maidens with the well-pricked fingers. They are loved in the city, and married in the suburbs. She was a darling.

Max. Farewell!—and what's this? (*Reading*) "Episode." But there's nothing in this—just a little dust.

Anatol (*taking the envelope*). Dust?—that was a flower once.

Max. What does this mean—"Episode?"

Anatol. Oh, nothing—just a chance thought. It was only an episode, a romance that lasted two hours. Dust? —it's sad to think that this is all that remains of so much sweetness, isn't it?

Max. Why, yes. But why did you choose just that word? You might have written it on any of them.

Anatol. True. But I never felt so conscious of it as just that time. Frequently, when I was with this one or that—particularly in my earlier days, when I thought great things of myself—I would feel like saying—"you poor child—you poor child."

Max. Why?

Anatol. I thought myself one of the Mighty Ones of the Intellect. These girls—these women,—I crushed them under my iron tread as I wandered over the earth —it is the law of life, I thought. My path lies over these bodies——

Max. You were the storm wind that scatters the blossoms, eh?

Anatol. Yes—and thus I rushed on my way—and I thought—"you poor child"—I deceived myself—I know now that I am not of the Great, and the saddest part of it is that I am quite reconciled to the thought. But in those years——

Max. Well, and this episode?

Anatol. That was one of them,—a blossom that I found in my path——

Max. And crushed?

Anatol. Yes. When I look back on it, it seems to me to me as if I had really crushed her.

Max. Indeed!

Anatol. Yes. Listen. Really, it's one of the very sweetest of all my experiences—I can't tell you——

Max. Why not?

Anatol. Because the story itself is so commonplace— it's nothing at all—you couldn't feel the beauty there

was in it. The whole secret of it is that it was *I* who experienced it.

Max. Well?

Anatol. I sat at my piano—in the little room I had then—it was evening—I had known her just two hours—the lamp with the green-red shade was burning—I mention the green-red lamp, because it's part of the story.

Max. Well?

Anatol. Well, I was at the piano—she sat at my feet so that I could not use the pedal—her head rested on my lap and her tumbled hair shone green and red in the lamp light. I was improvising on the keys, but with my left hand only—she held the right to her lips.

Max. Well?

Anatol. This expectant "well" of yours will drive me mad. There really isn't any more to it. I had known her only two hours and I knew that I would probably never see her again once the evening was over—she told me so herself—and yet I had the feeling that I was loved madly in that moment. It wrapped me round—the air was heavy and fragrant with this love—do you understand? (MAX *nods*) And again I had that foolish and divine thought—"you poor, poor child." The episodic character of it all came so clearly to my consciousness. While I still felt her warm breath on my hand, I seemed to be living it over in memory—as if it were already a thing of the past. She was just another one of those over whom my path led me. The word came to me then—that arid word "Episode"—and yet I seemed to feel myself as something Eternal. I knew that this poor child would never lose the memory of this hour—I had never felt so sure of it as in just this case. Oh, I often realize that by next morning I will be quite forgotten. But this was different—I was all the world to this girl who lay at my feet—I felt the sacred, enduring love with which she surrounded me—one can feel that—I know that in that moment she had thought for nothing but for me—and yet for me she was already something that was past—something that was fleeting—an Episode.

Max. Who was she?

Anatol. You know her—we met her one evening in a jolly crowd—you told me that you'd known her before.

Max. I've known so many—before. As you describe her, in the lamplight, she seems like a fairy princess.

Anatol. She wasn't at all—do you know who she was?—of course I'm spoiling the entire charm.

Max. Who was she?

Anatol (smiling). She was——

Max. Theatre?

Anatol. No—Circus.

Max. Not really?

Anatol. Yes, it was Bianca. I never told you until now that I had seen her again—after that first evening, when I scarcely spoke to her.

Max. And you really believe that Bibi loved you?

Anatol. Yes—she did. I met her on the street a week or so after that party—she was leaving for Russia the following day.

Max. So there was no time to lose.

Anatol. Oh, I knew it—I've spoiled it all for you. You never have discovered the true secret of love.

Max. And where do you find the solution of the enigma—woman?

Anatol. In—the right mood.

Max. I see—twilight—your green-red lamp—music.

Anatol. Yes, that is it. And because a color can change the whole world for me, is just why I find life so rich in variety, so gloriously changeful. What would this girl with the sparkling hair mean to you or to a thousand others—what would this lamp mean to you—the lamp you mock at? A circus rider and a red-green glass over a light. Of course, then all the charm is gone—one may *live*, but one will never experience anything. The rest of you blunder into an adventure brutally, with your eyes open but your soul shut tight, and you never see its colors. My spirit sheds a thousand lights and colors over it and I can *feel* where you only—possess.

Max. A well-spring of delight, surely, this spirit of

yours. All whom you love dip into it and bring up for you a strange fragrance of adventure and mystery on which you may intoxicate yourself.

Anatol. Call it that if you will.

Max. But as far as your circus rider is concerned—you can hardly make me believe that she had the same feelings—under that red-green light, as you did.

Anatol. But certainly I could sense her emotions while I held her in my arms.

Max. I have known her also, and better than you do.

Anatol. Better?

Max. Yes, because there was no love between us. She's not the fairy princess for me, she's just one of a thousand fallen women to whom a dreamer's imagination lends new virginity. For me, she's no better than a hundred others who leap through the hoops or dance in the closing quadrille.

Anatol. Indeed——

Max. And she *is* nothing more. It is not that I fail to see what she can be, it is you who see in her what she is not. Out of the rich, beautiful life of your soul you poured the glow of your fanciful youth into her empty heart. The light you saw shining there was a reflection of your light.

Anatol. No, it was not. That has happened to me now and then, but not this time. I don't want to make her out any better than she was. I was neither the first nor the last—I was——

Max. What were you? Just one of many. She was the same in your arms as in all the others—Woman, in her highest moment.

Anatol. Why did I tell you—you haven't understood me.

Max. Oh, no. It is you who have misunderstood me. What I wanted to say was that while you may have felt all the sweet magic, it was the same to her as any other time. Can she see the world in a thousand colors?

Anatol. Do you know her very well?

Max. Yes, we met frequently in the crowd where you first found her.

Anatol. Was that all?

Max. Yes. But we were good friends. She is witty —we liked to chat together.

Anatol. And that was all?

Max. That was all.

Anatol. And yet—she *did* love me.

Max. Sha'n't we go on with these? (*Taking up a little package, reads*) "Could I but know the meaning of thy smile, oh green-eyed-beauty——"

Anatol. By the way, do you know that the circus company is here again?

Max. Certainly. She's here, too.

Anatol. I suppose so.

Max. She is. And I shall see her this evening.

Anatol. You will? Do you know where she lives?

Max. No, she wrote to me, she's coming here.

Anatol (*springing up*). What? Why didn't you tell me that sooner?

Max. What concern is it of yours? I thought you wanted to "free and alone."

Anatol. Nonsense.

Max. And, besides, there's nothing sadder than a warmed-over magic.

Anatol. You mean——

Max. I mean—that you ought to avoid seeing her again.

Anatol. You mean she might attract me again?

Max. No—but because it was so beautiful then. You'd better go home with that sweet memory of yours. Never try to repeat an experience.

Anatol. You don't seriously believe that I'll give up this meeting when it's so easy to my hand?

Max. She has more sense than you have—she hasn't written to you—possibly merely because she's forgotten you.

Anatol. That is absurd.

Max. You don't think it possible?

Anatol. The idea is ridiculous.

Max. Not everyone's memories can drink from the Elixir of Life that gives yours their enduring freshness.

Anatol. Ah, but that—that was one of the immortal hours.

Max. I hear steps outside.

Anatol. Is it she already?

Max. You'd better go out through my bedroom.

Anatol. I'm not such a fool.

Max. Then you're really willing to have all the charm spoiled?

Anatol. I shall stay here. (*Knock at the door*)

Max. You'd better go. (ANATOL *shakes his head*) Then go back there—where she won't see you right away—here, this will do. (*Pushes* ANATOL *to the fireplace where he is partially hidden by the screen*)

Anatol (*leaning against the mantel*). Oh, very well. (*There is a knock*)

Max. Come in.

Bianca (*coming in quickly*). Good evening, dear Max. Here I am.

Max (*with both hands outstretched*). Good evening, Bianca, this is mighty nice of you.

Bianca. You got my letter? You're the very first—you're the only one anyway.

Max. You can imagine how proud I am!

Bianca. And how are all the others? Is the crowd still together? Will we meet after the performance evenings, as usual?

Max (*helping her with her hat and coat*). There were some evenings when you didn't join us.

Bianca. After the performance?

Max. Yes, when you disappeared immediately after the performance.

Bianca (*smiling*). Yes—but that's natural—you know, it's awfully nice to hear that said to you without any jealousy. A girl needs such friends as you are.

Max. Yes, I should think so.

Bianca. Friends who like you but don't torture you.

Max. That doesn't happen to you often, does it?

Bianca (*catches a glimpse of* ANATOL). But you're not alone? (ANATOL *comes forward and bows*)

Max. It's an old acquaintance.

Bianca (*with her lorgnette at her eyes*). Ah—— (ANATOL *bows, looks at her expectantly*)

Max. Well, what do you say to this surprise, Bibi?

Bianca (*embarrassed, searching her memory*). Why, of course—we know each other.——

Anatol. Surely—Bianca.

Bianca. Why, yes—we know each other very well-

Anatol (*takes her hand with both of his, excited*). Bianca——

Bianca. Why, yes—where did we meet? Let me see—oh, yes——

Max. Then you remember?

Bianca. Why, of course—it was in St. Petersburg?

Anatol (*dropping her hand*). No—it was not in St. Petersburg, Miss Bianca. (*He turns to go out*)

Bianca (*hastily, aside to* MAX). What's the matter? Have I offended him? (ANATOL *goes out*)

Max. He's gone, you see.

Bianca. But what does this mean?

Max. Didn't you recognize him?

Bianca. Why, yes—I recognized him—but I can't just remember—where and when——

Max. Why, Bibi—it was Anatol.

Bianca. Anatol? Anatol?

Max. Yes, Anatol—music—red-green lamp shade—here in the city—about three years ago.

Bianca. Oh, my goodness, where were my eyes! Anatol! (*Runs to the door*) I must call him back. (*Opens the door, runs out into the hall, calls*) Anatol! Anatol! (MAX *stands there smiling until she comes back*)

Max. Well?

Bianca (*coming in*). He must be out in the street already. (*Opens the window quickly*) There he is.

Max (*at window, behind her*). Yes, there he is.

Bianca (*calls*). Anatol!

Max. He doesn't hear you.

Bianca (*stamping her foot*). What a pity! You must ask him to forgive me—I'm afraid I've hurt him, the dear, good boy.

Max. Then you do remember him?

Bianca. Why, of course. But he looks so like someone I knew in St. Petersburg.

Max (*soothingly*). I'll tell him that.

Bianca. And then, besides—when you haven't even thought of a man for three years and you suddenly see him again—you can't remember everything all of the time.

Max. I'd better shut the window—there's such a cold draft coming in. (*He shuts the window*)

Bianca. I'll see him while I'm here, won't I?

Max. Perhaps. But I want to show you something. (*Takes an envelope from the desk and shows it to her*)

Bianca. What's this?

Max. It's the flower that you wore on that evening—on *that* evening.

Bianca. He kept it?

Max. As you see.

Bianca. Then he really loved me?

Max. Madly,—unspeakably, eternally—as he loved all these others. (*Points to the packages*)

Bianca. All these others? What does that mean? Are those all flowers?

Max. Flowers—letters, curls, photographs—we were just arranging them.

Bianca (*piqued*). Under different headings.

Max. Surely.

Bianca. And where do I come in?

Max. In *this* file, I think. (*Throws the envelope into the fire*)

Bianca. Oh——

Max (*aside*). I'm avenging you as well as I can, Anatol. (*Aloud*) And now don't be angry any longer. Sit down here and tell me some of your adventures of the last three years.

Bianca. I don't feel much like it now. That was a nice reception.

Max. But you know I'm your friend—do tell me something interesting.

Bianca (*in the armchair by the fire*). What do you want to hear?

Max (*in the chair opposite*). Tell me about the man in St. Petersburg——

Bianca. You're unendurable.

Max. Very well.

Bianca. What do you want me to tell——?

Max. Why not begin it—"once upon a time?" Once upon a time there was a big, big city——

Bianca (*still irritated*). And there was a big, big circus——

Max. And there was a little, little girl——

Bianca. And she jumped through a big, big hoop. (*Laughs softly*)

Max. There you see—now we're off—(*the curtain begins to fall very slowly*)—and in a box—there sat every evening——

Bianca. And in a box there sat every evening—such a handsome—handsome—— oh, dear——

Max. Well?

CURTAIN

MILESTONES

CHARACTERS

EMILIE

ANATOL

MILESTONES

EMILIE'S *room, furnished with discreet elegance. Twilight. The window is open, a park beyond can be seen; the top branches of a tree, the leaves just opening, almost fill the window frame.*

Emilie. Ah, ah—this is where I find you?—at my desk? And what are you doing there? Ransacking the drawers? Anatol!

Anatol. I am in my right,—and I was right to do it, as I have discovered.

Emilie. Well, and what have you found? Your own letters.

Anatol. And how about this?

Emilie. What?

Anatol. These two little stones—one a ruby—and the other, darker—they're new to me—I didn't give them to you.

Emilie. No—I had—forgotten.

Anatol. Forgotten? And they were so carefully hidden away in the corner of the lowest drawer. Can't you confess at once instead of lying, like all the rest of them?—ah, ha, you refuse to speak now? This cheap indignation—it's so much easier to keep silent when one is crushed by the burden of guilt. I'm going to look further—where have you hidden your other jewelry?

Emilie. I have no other. (ANATOL *begins to pull the drawers open*) Please don't do that—I swear to you that I have nothing more.

Anatol. Then why did you have this here—why?

Emilie. It was wrong—perhaps.

Anatol. Perhaps? Emilie, this is the very eve of the day on which I intended making you my wife. I be-

lieved that all the past was wiped out—all of it. You and I together gathered all the letters, the fans, the thousand trifles which reminded me of the time when we had not met—and you and I together threw them all into the fire there. And your bracelets, your rings—your earrings—we gave them away, or we threw them over the bridge into the river, out of the window onto the street. You knelt before me and you swore to me—"It's all past and over, in your arms I have learned to know what love really means." I believed you,—of course, we always believe what women tell us, from the very first lie that makes us happy——

Emilie. Shall I swear to you again——?

Anatol. What good would it do? I'm through—I'm through with you. And how well you acted the part! Feverishly, as if you would wash out every stain upon your past, you stood here in front of the fire and watched the papers, the ribbons and the knick-knacks going up in flame; and you sobbed in my arms that day we strolled by the river and tossed a costly bracelet into the gray water. You wept purifying tears then—tears of repentance—and yet it was all a stupid farce! Don't you see that it is all in vain?—that I still distrust you?—that I was right to ransack your desk? Why don't you speak? Why don't you defend yourself?

Emilie. If you intend to leave me——

Anatol. But I want to know the meaning of these two stones? I want to know why you kept just these.

Emilie. You don't love me any more.

Anatol. I want to know the truth—Emilie, the truth——

Emilie. Why? If you don't love me any more?

Anatol. There may be something in the truth which —which makes me understand. Emilie, I don't want to believe the worst of you.

Emilie. Then you forgive me?

Anatol. You must tell me what these stones mean.

Emilie. And then you will forgive me?

Anatol. I want to know why you kept this ruby.

Emilie. And you'll listen to me quietly?

Anatol. Yes—but do speak——

Emilie. This ruby—belonged in a locket—it fell out——

Anatol. Who gave you the locket?

Emilie. That's not why I kept it—I wore it on a—a certain day—on a simple chain—around my neck.

Anatol. Who gave it to you?

Emilie. That's unimportant—it was my mother, I think. You see, if I were really the miserable creature you believe me to be, I would tell you that I kept it because my mother gave it to me—and you'd believe it. But I have kept this ruby because it—it fell out of my locket on a day—the memory of which—is very dear to me.

Anatol. Go on.

Emilie. Oh, it relieves me to be able to tell you. Wouldn't you laugh at me if I were jealous of your first love?

Anatol. What do you mean by that?

Emilie. And yet the memory of it is something very sweet, it's one of those sorrows that seem to soothe us—and then—that day is very dear to me on which I first learned to know—the emotion—the feeling that now binds me to you. Oh, believe me, one must have learned how to love, to be able to love as I love you. If we had met at a time when love was something new for both of us, we might have passed by each other unheeding. No, don't shake your head, Anatol, it is true, and you told me so yourself.

Anatol. I, myself?

Emilie. You said it was best this way, that we both had to become ripe for this height of passion.

Anatol. Yes, there's always some such consolation handy when we're in love with a fallen woman.

Emilie. So I will tell you frankly that this ruby means to me the memory of the day——

Anatol. Well, say it.

Emilie. You know what I mean—the memory of that day—I was a silly little thing—only sixteen.

Anatol. And he was twenty—tall and dark?

Emilie (*innocently*). I don't remember that, be-

loved. But I remember the forest that whispered around us—and the bright spring day that laughed above the tree-tops. Yes, and I remember a sunbeam that stole out between the bushes and glistened on a yellow flower.

Anatol. And you don't curse the day that took you from me—before I knew you?

Emilie—That day may have given me to you. No, Anatol, I do not curse that day, and I scorn to lie to you and to say that I have ever done it. Anatol, I love you as I never loved anyone yet—as you have never been loved yet. And even though every previous experience of mine has lost its value through your first kiss—every other man whom I have ever known has vanished from my memory—that is no reason why I should forget the moment that made a woman of me.

Anatol. And you pretend to love me?

Emilie. I can scarcely remember that man's face now—I can scarcely recall the look in his eyes——

Anatol. But it was in his arms that you laughed love's first sigh—it was from his heart that the warmth first streamed over into yours, awakening the dreaming girl to womanhood—you don't forget all that, do you, grateful soul? And don't you see how this confession maddens me?—don't you see that you have called up all the slumbering past?—and that I realize anew that you can dream of other kisses than mine, and that when you close your eyes in my arms you can see other faces than mine?

Emilie. Oh, how you misunderstand me! Then you are right, if you believe we must part.

Anatol. I don't understand you now.

Emilie. Ah, the women who can lie are fortunate! You can't endure the truth, you men. And yet you've implored me—and swore that you would forgive everything, only not a lie. And I—I confessed everything, I humiliated myself before you—I cried it to your face, "Anatol, I am a lost woman—but I love you." Not a single one of all the stupid excuses that the others find so easy, ever passed my lips. I said to you, "Anatol, I loved luxury, I was wanton, hot-blooded, I have sold

myself or thrown myself away—I am not worthy of your love," and do you remember that I said all this to you before you even kissed my hand for the first time? I wanted to run away from you because I loved you, but you pursued me, you begged for my love. I didn't want you, because I didn't want to degrade the man whom I loved more than all—ah, the very first man whom I ever loved—— But you took me and made me yours, and I wept—and trembled—you raised me so high—you gave me back everything—everything that the others had taken from me. In your arms I became what I had never been before—pure and happy—you were so great—you could forgive—and now——

Anatol. And now?

Emilie. And now you turn me off because I'm just like all the others.

Anatol. No—you're not.

Emilie (*gently*). What shall I do? Shall I throw away this ruby?

Anatol. I'm not as great as you think me—no, I'm very petty—throw this ruby away. (*He looks at it*) It fell out of the locket—it lay in the grass—under the yellow flowers—a sunbeam fell on it—and it sparkled. (*There is a long pause*) Come, Emilie, it's growing dark outside—shall we walk in the park?

Emilie. Isn't it too cold?

Anatol. Oh, no—the air is full of the fragrance of awakening spring.

Emilie. As you wish, beloved.

Anatol. And this, this other stone?

Emilie. Oh, this——

Anatol. Yes, this black one—what about this?

Emilie. Do you know what sort of a stone that is?

Anatol. Well?

Emilie (*with a look of pride and greed*). That is a black diamond.

Anatol (*rising*). Oh!

Emilie (*still looking at the stone*). It's very rare.

Anatol (*with suppressed anger*). And why—why did you keep this one?

Emilie (still absorbed in the stone). Why—it's worth a quarter of a million. (ANATOL *utters a slight scream and throws the stone into the fire*)

Emilie (screams). What are you doing? (*She kneels down, seizes the poker and seeks eagerly for the stone among the glowing coals*)

Anatol (stands looking at her, she is quite absorbed in her work, has forgotten him entirely, her cheeks are glowing with eagerness—he looks at her for a few moments, then speaks calmly). Harlot! (*He goes out*)

THE FAREWELL SUPPER

CHARACTERS

ANNIE

MAX

ANATOL

A WAITER

THE FAREWELL SUPPER

Private room at Sacher's restaurant. ANATOL *is standing by the door giving the* WAITER *his orders.* MAX *is leaning back in an armchair.*

Max. Well, are you nearly ready?

Anatol. In a moment. (*To the* WAITER) Did you understand? (WAITER *goes out* ANATOL *comes down*)

Max. And suppose she doesn't come at all?

Anatol. Why "at all?" It's just ten o'clock—she can't possibly be here before this.

Max. The ballet was over some time ago.

Anatol. Well? She has to get her make-up off, and change her clothes—I'd better run across and wait for her.

Max. Don't spoil her.

Anatol. Spoil her? If you knew——

Max. Yes, yes, I know. You treat her brutally—but that's one way to spoil her.

Anatol. That wasn't what I was going to say. If you only knew——

Max. Well, say it——

Anatol. I feel very solemn to-night.

Max. You're not going to—to become engaged to her?

Anatol. Oh, no, it's much more solemn.

Max. You're going to marry her?

Anatol. Oh, dear—how superficial you are. As if there was not a solemnity of the soul which has nothing whatever to do with all this external nonsense.

Max. I see. Then you've discovered a hitherto unknown corner in the world of your emotions? And you think she understands?

Anatol. You're very clumsy at guessing to-day. I am celebrating—the end.

Max. Oh!

Anatol. This is a farewell supper.

Max. And what do you want me here for?

Anatol. You are to close the eyes of our dead love.

Max. Your comparison is in very bad taste.

Anatol. I've been postponing this supper for a week.

Max. You must have quite an appetite by this time.

Anatol. Oh, we've been having supper together every evening all this week—but I couldn't find the right word —I didn't dare—you don't know how nervous it makes me.

Max. And what do you need me for? You want me to give you the word?

Anatol. It's just as well to have you here—in any case—I want you to assist me if it should be necessary. You can soften things—soothe her—make her understand——

Max. Well, please tell me first why all this is necessary?

Anatol. With pleasure—she bores me.

Max. And you find someone else more amusing?

Anatol. Yes——

Max. I see.

Anatol. Ah, the other—the other——

Max. What type?

Anatol. None at all—something quite new—something quite unique.

Max. Yes, that's so—we never recognize the type until the last.

Anatol. Imagine a girl—how shall I explain her—three-quarter rhythm.

Max. You seem to be still under the influence of the ballet.

Anatol. Yes—I can't help it—she reminds me of a slow Viennese waltz—sentimental cheeriness—smiling roguish melancholy,—that's what she is like—a sweet little blonde head, oh, it's too hard to describe—I feel so warm and content with her—when I give her a bunch of violets she receives it with a tear in the corner of her eye——

Max. Try her with a bracelet some time.

Anatol. Oh, dear man—that wouldn't do at all in this case—you're quite mistaken. And believe me, I wouldn't want to bring her here for supper. Her style is the cozy little cheap restaurant across the Line—with the hideous wall-paper and the petty official at the next table. That's the sort of place where I've been spending the last evenings, with her.

Max. How's that? Didn't you just tell me that you'd been here with Annie?

Anatol. Yes, that, too. I've eaten two suppers every evening last week—one with the girl I'm trying to win—the other with the girl I'm trying to lose. And I haven't been successful in either case.

Max. I have a suggestion. Suppose you take Annie to a cheap restaurant and bring the new blonde here to supper—maybe that'll help.

Anatol. Your comprehension of the situation is hampered by the fact that you don't know the new girl. She's the most modest creature in the world—why, you ought to see her, if I suggest ordering an expensive wine.

Max. Tears in the corner of her eye?

Anatol. She won't hear to it, under any condition.

Max. Then you've been drinking Markersdorfer lately?

Anatol. Yes—before ten o'clock—the champagne comes later. Such is life.

Max. Oh, no—not always.

Anatol. Imagine the contrast. But I've had enough of it. This is one of those cases where I feel that I am really a very honest nature——

Max. Are you?

Anatol. I can't stand this double game—I'm losing all my self-respect——

Max. Oh, see here—it's only me—you needn't put on any airs with me.

Anatol. Why not—seeing as you *are* here? But in all seriousness, I can't pretend to love where I don't feel anything more.

Max. Then you only pretend where you do feel something——

Anatol. I spoke to Annie honestly—in the very beginning—when we had exchanged our vows of eternal love—"Annie, dear," I said, "if either of us should feel, one fine day, that it's all over with our love, then we must confess it openly——"

Max. You arranged all that just as you were vowing eternal love? That's very good.

Anatol. I've repeated it frequently—"we have no responsibility towards one another—we are free—we can part calmly when the time has come—but there must be no deception—I abhor that."

Max. Then it ought to be easy, this evening.

Anatol. Easy? Now that the time has come, I'm afraid to say it—it will hurt her—and I can't endure tears. I may even fall in love with her again if she cries—and then I'll be deceiving the other.

Max. Oh, no. No deception—I abhor that——

Anatol. It'll all be much easier if you are here. There is a breath of cold, wholesome cheeriness about you, that will stiffen the sentimentality of the parting. One cannot weep in your presence.

Max. Well, I'm here—but that's about all that I can do for you. You certainly don't want me to encourage her to let you go—do you? I could never do that—you're such a dear fellow.

Anatol. Oh, well, you might try—up to a certain point, anyway. You might tell her that she isn't losing very much in me.

Max. Yes, I might do that.

Anatol. Tell her that she can find a hundred others, better looking—richer——

Max. Cleverer——

Anatol. Oh, no—you needn't exaggerate. (*The* WAITER *opens the door and* ANNIE *comes, with a raincoat hastily thrown over her dress, a white boa around her neck, her conspicuously big hat is put on anyhow, and she carries a pair of yellow gloves*)

Annie. Oh, good evening.

Anatol. Good evening, Annie. Excuse me for not——

Annie. You're a nice person to depend on. (*Throws off her coat*) I stand there, looking around—not a soul in sight.

Anatol. You hadn't far to come——

Annie. But you ought to keep your promise. Good evening, Max. (*To* ANATOL) You might have let them begin serving. (ANATOL *kisses her*)

Annie. I'm hungry. (*The* WAITER *knocks*) Come in. He knocks today—it never occurred to him before. (*The* WAITER *comes in*)

Anatol. You can serve the supper. (*The* WAITER *goes out*)

Annie. Were you in the opera house tonight?

Anatol. No—I was obliged——

Annie. You didn't lose much—everybody was sleepy tonight——

Max. What was the opera?

Annie. I don't know. (*They sit down at the table*) I go to my dressing room—and then on to the stage—I never bother about the rest of it—by the way, I have something to tell you, Anatol.

Anatol. Have you, dear? Anything important?

Annie. Yes, rather—it may surprise you. (*The* WAITER *comes in with dishes*)

Anatol. You make me curious. I, too——

Annie. Wait a moment—there's no necessity for him to hear it——

Anatol (*to* WAITER). You may go—we'll ring. (WAITER *goes out*) Well?

Annie. Yes, my dear Anatol—it'll surprise you and yet I don't know—it shouldn't—no, it really shouldn't surprise you.

Max. Have they raised your salary?

Anatol. Don't interrupt her.

Annie. Why, you see, Anatol—say, are these Ostend or Whitestable?

Anatol. Now she's talking about the oysters. They're Ostend.

Annie. I thought so—I do love oysters. It's really the only food that one can eat every day.

Max. Not only can—but ought to.

Annie. Don't you think so?

Anatol. But you had something important to tell me.

Annie. Yes—it is important—decidedly so. You remember a certain remark of yours?

Anatol. Which? How can I possibly know which remark you mean?

Max. No, he can't.

Annie. Why, I mean the—now wait a minute—how was it exactly? "Annie," you said, "we must never deceive one another——"

Anatol. Yes, yes—well——

Annie. "Never deceive each other—it would be better to tell the entire truth."

Anatol. Yes—I meant——

Annie. But if it's too late——

Anatol. What's that?

Annie. No—it's not too late. I'm telling you in time—but only just in time. It may be too late to-morrow.

Anatol. Are you crazy, Annie?

Max. How's that?

Annie. Anatol, you must eat your oysters—or I won't say another word.

Anatol. What does this mean? You must——

Annie. Eat!

Anatol. You must talk—I can't stand this sort of joke.

Annie. Well—didn't we arrange that we were to tell each other quite calmly—when the time came? The time has come.

Anatol. What time? What does this mean?

Annie. It means that this is my last supper with you.

Anatol. Will you have the kindness—to explain yourself?

Annie. It's all up between us.

Anatol. Yes—but-

Max. Oh, this is excellent-

Annie. What's so excellent about it? Well, I don't care—it's true.

Anatol. My dear girl—I still don't understand—have you had an offer of marriage?

Annie. Oh, if that was all—that would be no reason for getting rid of you.

Anatol. Getting rid of me?

Annie. I'll have to tell you—I am in love, Anatol—madly in love.

Anatol. And may I ask with whom?

Annie. Say, Max, what are you laughing at?

Max. This is very funny.

Anatol. Don't mind him. This is a matter between us two, Annie. You certainly owe me an explanation.

Annie. Well, I'm giving it to you. I have fallen in love with someone else. And I'm telling you openly—because that's the way it was arranged between us.

Anatol. Yes, but—who the devil——

Annie. My dear boy, you mustn't be coarse.

Anatol. I demand—I demand definitely-

Annie. Max, won't you please ring the bell. I'm so hungry.

Anatol. Ha! She's hungry—hungry! At such a moment!

Max (*to* ANATOL). Remember this is ***her first*** supper tonight. (*The* WAITER *comes in*)

Anatol. What do you want?

Waiter. You rang, sir.

Max. Bring the next course. (WAITER *clears table*)

Annie. Yes—Catalini's going to Germany, that's settled.

Max. Indeed! And they're letting her go—without any fuss.

Annie. I don't know about that.

Anatol (*pacing the room*). The wine—where's the wine? Jean! Are you asleep?

Waiter. Here's the wine, sir.

Anatol. I don't mean that wine—I mean the champagne—you know I want it with the first course.

(WAITER *goes out*) And now your explanation, please.

Annie. It's no use believing a word you men say—not a word. It sounded so nice when you said it, "When we feel that the end has come, we'll say so openly and we'll part peacefully."

Anatol. Will you please finally——

Annie. This is what he calls being peaceful.

Anatol. My dear girl—you can understand that it interests me, can't you? Who——

Annie (*sipping the wine slowly*). Ah—um——

Anatol. Well, drink it.

Annie. You can wait a minute, can't you?

Anatol. You generally drink it in one gulp——

Annie. But my dear Anatol, I'm saying good-bye to this Bordeaux. Goodness knows for how long.

Anatol. What nonsense is this?

Annie. There'll be no Bordeaux for me—and no oysters—and no champagne—(*the* WAITER *comes with another dish, she looks at it*)—and no Filet aux Truffes—that's all over.

Max. What a sentimental appetite you have. May I give you some of this?

Annie. Thanks. (ANATOL *lights a cigarette*)

Max. Aren't you eating anything?

Anatol. Not yet. (WAITER *goes out*) And now I would really like to know—who the happy man is.

Annie. Suppose I should tell you his name,—you wouldn't know any more then.

Anatol. What sort of a man is he? How did you come to know him? What does he look like?

Annie. Beautiful—he's beautiful! But that's all.

Anatol. It seems to be enough for you.

Annie. Yes, there'll be no oysters now.

Anatol. So you said.

Annie. And no champagne.

Anatol. Confound it—he must have some other characteristic than the mere fact that he can't buy oysters and champagne for you.

Max. He's right—that isn't what you might call a profession or an occupation.

Annie. But what does it matter—if I love him? I'm giving it all up—it's something quite new—something I've never experienced before.

Max. Oh, but see here, Annie, if that's all it is, Anatol could have offered you a cheap supper, too.

Anatol. What is he? A clerk? A chimney-sweep? A traveling salesman?

Annie. See here—you mustn't insult him——

Max. Then why don't you tell us what he is?

Annie. He's an artist.

Anatol. What kind of an artist—trapeze? That'll be something to your taste. A circus-rider?

Annie. Stop scolding. He's a colleague of mine.

Anatol. Ah ha—an old acquaintance, eh? You've seen him daily for some years?—and you've been untrue to me for some time?

Annie. I shouldn't have said anything to you in that case. I depended on your word—that's why I'm confessing it to you before it's too late.

Anatol. But you've been in love with him—Lord knows how long—you've been deceiving me—in spirit anyway.

Annie. Well, I can't help that.

Anatol. You are a——

Max. Anatol!

Anatol. Do I know him?

Annie. I don't suppose you've noticed him—he dances in the chorus—but he'll be promoted—he'll be promoted.

Anatol. And since when—have you discovered your heart?

Annie. Since this evening.

Anatol. Don't lie to me.

Annie. I'm telling you the truth. This evening—I knew it was my Fate.

Anatol. Her fate—do you hear that, Max? Her fate.

Annie. Well, a thing like that is fate.

Anatol. But I want to know all about it—I have a right to know—you're still mine in this moment—I want to know how long this has been going on—I want to

know when it began—I want to know how he dared——

Max. Yes, you really ought to tell us.

Annie. This is what I get for being so honest—um—I ought to have done the way Fritzi did—with her Baron. He don't know anything yet, and she's been running around for three months with a Hussar Lieutenant.

Anatol. The Baron will find it out some of these days.

Annie. Maybe—but *you'd* never have found it out—never—I'm much too slick for that—and you're much too stupid. (*Pours out a glass of wine*)

Anatol. Stop drinking.

Annie. Not much. I want to get a jag tonight—it'll probably be the last.

Max. For a week?

Annie. Forever. I'll stay with Carl because I'm really fond of him—and he's so jolly even if he hasn't any money and he don't make me angry—and he's a dear, dear, sweet boy.

Anatol. You haven't kept your promise—you've been in love with him ever so long—that's a stupid lie—that talk about this evening.

Annie. You needn't believe it if you don't want to.

Max. Now, Annie, do tell the story straight—or not at all. If you want to part calmly, you ought to do this for him, for your Anatol——

Anatol. Then I'll tell you something, too.

Annie. Well, it began—— (*The* WAITER *comes in*)

Anatol. Go on. (*Sits down beside her*)

Annie. It was about two weeks ago—or maybe a little longer—when he brought a couple of roses—at the stage door. It made me laugh—he looked so shy.

Anatol. You didn't tell me that.

Annie. What was there to tell?

Anatol. Well, go on.

Annie. And then at rehearsal—he hung around me—in such a funny way—and I noticed it. It made me mad at first—and then I was glad.

Anatol. Quite simple, I see.

Annie. And then we began to talk to each other—and everything about him pleased me.

Anatol. What did you talk about?

Annie. All sorts of things—he told me how they'd put him out of school—and how he'd tried to learn a trade—and then the real stage blood in him began to make itself felt——

Anatol. You've never told me any of that——

Annie. And then what do you think? Then it came out that when we were children we lived in the same street—just two houses apart.

Anatol. Neighbors—how touching!

Annie Yes, isn't it? (*Drinks*)

Anatol. Go on.

Annie. There's nothing more—I've told you everything. It's my Fate—and you can't do anything against Fate—no—you—can't—do anything—when it's Fate.

Anatol. But I want to know about this evening.

Annie. What about——? (*Her head sinks back*)

Max. She's going to sleep.

Anatol. Wake her up. Put the wine where she can't see it—I must know what happened this evening. Annie—Annie——

Annie. This evening—he told me—that he—loved me.

Anatol. And you?

Annie. I told him—that I was very glad. And because I don't want to—to deceive him—I'll say good-bye to you.

Anatol. Because you don't want to deceive *him?* Then it isn't for my sake—but for his?

Annie. What's the matter with you? I don't love you any more.

Anatol. Ah ha—that was good! Fortunately I don't mind this now.

Annie. Indeed!

Anatol. Because I, too, am in the same fortunate situation—I can get along without your affection now.

Annie. Oh, can you?

Anatol. I can. I haven't loved you for some time—I love someone else.

Annie. Ha! Ha!

Anatol. Ask Max. I told him all about it before you came in.

Annie. Did you?

Anatol. I haven't loved you for some time—the other is a thousand times better and more beautiful.

Annie. Indeed!

Anatol. I'd give a thousand women like you for one such girl—do you hear? (ANNIE *laughs*) You needn't laugh—ask Max.

Annie. This is awfully funny—you're trying to make me believe——

Anatol. But it's true I tell you—I swear it's true. I haven't loved you for ever so long. I haven't thought of you—not even while I was here with you. And when I kissed you I was thinking of the other—the other——

Annie. Well—then we're quits.

Anatol. Do you think so?

Annie. Yes, we're quits—and I'm glad of it.

Anatol. No, we're not quits—not at all—it's not the same thing—your experience and mine. My story is not quite so—innocent.

Annie (*more serious*). What's that?

Anatol. My story sounds somewhat different.

Annie. Why is it different?

Anatol. Why, I—I have been untrue to you.

Annie (*rising*). What?

Anatol. I've deceived you—as you deserve. Day by day—night after night—I came from her when I met you—and returned to her when I left you.

Annie. That—is—infamous! (*She goes to hatstand, throws on her coat and boa*)

Anatol. One can't be quick enough with women like you—for else they'll get ahead of one—well, fortunately, I have no illusions.

Annie. Yes, there you can see——

Anatol. Exactly.

Annie. You can see that a man is a hundred times less considerate than a woman.

Anatol. Exactly. I'm not considerate——

Annie (*winds her boa around her throat, takes up her gloves, stands in front of* ANATOL) No, you're certainly not! I wouldn't have told you—*that*. (*She turns to go*)

Anatol. What's that?

Max. Let her go. You don't want to stop her, do you?

Anatol. You wouldn't have told me—*that?* You mean that you—that you——

Annie (*at the door*). I *never* would have told you—never—never—it takes a man to be so inconsiderate! (*The* WAITER *comes in with a dish of dessert*)

Anatol. Take that stuff away.

Annie. What's that? (*Looks at it*) Vanilla cream? Oh!

Anatol. You dare?

Max. Oh, let her—she has to say good-bye to the cream—forever.

Annie. Yes, and I'm glad to do it, too. And to say good-bye to the Bordeaux and the champagne—and the oysters—but most particularly am I glad to say good-bye to you, Anatol. (*Suddenly, with a vulgar laugh, she pounces on the box of cigarettes on a side table and takes out a handful, putting them in her bag*)

Annie. These aren't for me—I'm taking them for him. (*Goes out.* ANATOL *moves as if to follow, then stops by the door*)

Max (*calmly*). There, you see—it was very easy after all.

CURTAIN

DISSOLUTION

CHARACTERS

ANATOL

MAX

ELSA

DISSOLUTION

ANATOL'S *room. The dusk is falling. The room is empty at first, then* ANATOL *and* MAX *come in.*

Max. There—now I have come up with you after all.

Anatol. Can't you stay a while?

Max. But I'll be in the way, won't I?

Anatol. Please stay. I don't feel like being alone—and who knows whether she'll be here at all.

Max. Indeed!

Anatol. Seven times out of ten I sit and wait in vain.

Max. I couldn't stand that.

Anatol. And sometimes I have to believe her excuses—unfortunately, they're true.

Max. All seven times?

Anatol. How do I know? I give you my word there's nothing more disagreeable than to be the lover of a married woman.

Max. Oh, yes—I'd rather be her lover than her husband.

Anatol. And this has been going on—how long is it now? Two years—oh, no, it's more—it was two years at carnival time—this is the third "Springtime of our Love."

Max. What's the matter with you today?

Anatol (*has thrown himself down in a chair, still in overcoat and hat*). Oh, I'm so tired—I'm so nervous—I don't know what I want anyway.

Max. Why don't you go away?

Anatol. What for?

Max. To hasten the end.

Anatol. What do you mean by—the end?

Max. I've seen you like this before—last time—don't you remember?—when you could not make up your mind to part from a certain silly little thing who really wasn't worth your pangs?

Anatol. You mean—that I don't love her any more?

Max. Oh, if that were it—one doesn't suffer at that stage. What you're going through now is much worse than death—it's dying.

Anatol. You have a talent for saying these pleasant things. But you're right. This is dissolution—the death-agony.

Max. It's a sort of a comfort to talk it out. And we need no philosophy for this—we needn't go into the bigger generalities—it's enough if we comprehend this special case in its most hidden causes.

Anatol. I can't foresee much pleasure—from what you suggest.

Max. I was just talking. But I've seen it hanging over you all the afternoon, even in the Prater, where you were so pale, and just about as tiresome as you could be.

Anatol. She was to drive there today.

Max. And yet you were glad that we didn't meet her carriage—probably because you no longer have the same smile at your disposal with which you greeted her two years ago.

Anatol (*rising*). Why does it happen like this? Can you tell me why it happens? Must I go through all that again?—the gradual, slow, unspeakably sad fading out—oh, you don't realize how it makes me shudder——

Max. That's why I tell you to go away. Or else have the courage to tell her the truth.

Anatol. Tell her what? And how?

Max. Tell her quite simply—that it's all over.

Anatol. We have no call to be particularly proud of this sort of truth; it's only the brutal sincerity of tired liars.

Max. Of course. You'd rather hide it from one another in a thousand subterfuges—this fact that your feelings have changed—rather than part in a quick decision. Why, I wonder?

Anatol. Because we don't believe it ourselves yet. Because in the midst of this desert of dissolution there are strangely deceptive blossoming moments, when it all seems more beautiful than ever before. We never feel a stronger longing for happiness than in these last days of dying love—and then when something comes—a whim, a passing intoxication—a Nothing—disguised as happiness—we don't want to lift the mask. And then there are the moments in which we are ashamed of having thought all the sweetness ended. We beg each other's forgiveness without expressing it in words. We are exhausted by the fear of dying—and then life suddenly gleams before us, hotter—more ardent than ever—and more illusory than ever.

Max. Don't forget one thing—the end often begins much sooner than we believe. Many a love began to die with the first kiss. Have you never heard of the fatally ill who think themselves well until the last moment?

Anatol. I am not of these fortunate ones. I know that. I have always been a hypochrondriac of love. My emotions may not have been as sick as I thought them—that is all the worse—I feel sometimes as if the legend of the Evil Eye had come true in my case. But my Evil Eye is turned inward, and my best emotions sicken under its glance.

Max. Then you must have the courage of this Evil Eye.

Anatol. Oh, no, I envy the others—you know, those happy ones for whom every bit of life means a new victory. I have to force myself to carry anything to fulfillment—I make halts all along the road, I stop to think it over, to rest—I drag so much with me—the others conquer easily—in the very midst of the experience—it is all one and the same thing for them.

Max. Don't envy them, Anatol—they do not conquer—they merely pass by.

Anatol. And isn't that happiness of itself? They, at least, do not have this strange feeling of guilt—which is the secret of all our pangs of parting.

Max. Where is the guilt?

Anatol. Isn't it our duty to put the eternity which we promise them into the few years or hours during which we love them? And we never can—never! With this feeling of guilt we part from each one of them—and our melancholy is really only a secret confession—it is our last trace of honesty.

Max. Our first, sometimes.

Anatol. And all that hurts so.

Max. Your present always drags a heavy load of undigested past about with it. The first years of your love begin to decay before your soul has the strength to cast them off. What is the natural consequence? An odor of this decay floats through the wholesome blooming hours of the present—and its atmosphere is fatally poisoned.

Anatol. That may well be.

Max. Hence this eternal confusion of Once—and Now—and Later—in you—this undefined transition. What has been, isn't for you just a simple, inelastic fact, freed from the moods with which you experienced it—no, these moods cling to it heavily, only they fade and wither—and die.

Anatol. Yes—and from this atmosphere of decay come the torturing exhalations which waft over my very best moments. I want to save myself from them.

Max. And I notice, to my great surprise, that not one of us is safe from the danger of saying something really first-class—at least once in our lives. There's something on the tip of my tongue now: "Be strong, Anatol, and you will recover."

Anatol. You're laughing yourself while you say it. I may possibly have the power to do it—but I lack what is more important—the desire to do it. I feel that I would lose very much if one fine day I should suddenly become—"strong." There are so many diseases but only one health. If one is well, one is just like all the others—but if one is ill, one can still be quite different from all the others.

Max. Isn't that only vanity?

Anatol. Suppose it is? And now I suppose you will say that vanity is a fault, eh?

Max. The inmost sense of all this is—that you're not going away?

Anatol. I may go away—but I must surprise myself in doing it—it mustn't be any prearrangement—that spoils everything. That's the most dreadful part of all these things—you have to pack your trunk and order a cab—and tell the driver that you want to go to the station. . . .

Max. I could attend to all that for you. (ANATOL *has moved quickly to the window and looked out*)

Max. What is it now?

Anatol. Nothing——

Max. Oh, yes, I forgot—I'm going.

Anatol. There, you see—in this moment I feel——

Max. What?

Anatol. That I adore her.

Max. There's a very simple explanation of that—namely, that you really *do* adore her—in this moment.

Anatol. Good-bye then—and don't order the cab just yet.

Max. Don't be too self-confident—the Trieste Express doesn't leave for four hours yet—and I could send your trunk after you.

Anatol. Thanks awfully.

Max (*at the door*). I can't possibly leave without an aphorism.

Anatol. Well?

Max. Woman is an enigma.

Anatol. Oh, dear——

Max. Let me finish, please—woman is an enigma, so they say. But what an enigma we would be for a woman who had sense enough to study us.

Anatol. Bravo—bravo! (MAX *bows and goes out.* ANATOL *walks about the room, then sits down by the window again and smokes a cigarette. The sound of a violin is heard in the story above—there is a pause—steps are heard in the corridor—*ANATOL *listens, rises,*

puts down his cigarette and goes to meet ELSA, *who comes in deeply veiled*)

Anatol. At last!

Elsa. Yes, I know it's late. But I couldn't get here any earlier—it was impossible. (*Lays off her hat and veil*)

Anatol. Couldn't you have sent me word? Waiting makes me so nervous. But—you'll stay for a while?

Elsa. Not very long—my husband—— (ANATOL *turns away*) There you go again—I really can't help it.

Anatol. Yes, yes, you are right—that's the way it is—and we have to put up with it. Come over here, sweetheart. (*They go to the window*)

Elsa. Someone might see me.

Anatol. It's too dark now—and the curtain hides us. It's awfully annoying that you can't stay—I haven't seen you for two whole days—and it was such a few minutes the last time.

Elsa. Do you love me?

Anatol. You know I do—you're everything to me—I want to be with you always.

Elsa. And I'm so happy with you.

Anatol. Come—— (*Draws her down beside him in the armchair, kisses her hand*) This sweet little hand. . . . Do you hear the old man upstairs playing his violin? Isn't it beautiful?

Elsa. My sweetheart!

Anatol. Oh—to be with you—on Lake Como—or in Venice——

Elsa. I was there on my wedding trip.

Anatol (*with suppressed anger*). Did you have to say that?

Elsa. But I love only you—I've never loved anyone but you—never anyone else—and certainly not my husband——

Anatol (*folding his hands*). Please—can't you imagine yourself unmarried for a few seconds at least? Can't you enjoy the charm of this moment—and imagine that we two are alone in all the world? (*A clock strikes*)

Elsa. What time is it?

Anatol. Elsa—Elsa, don't ask. Forget that there's anyone else in the world—while you're with me.

Elsa (*tenderly*). Haven't I forgotten enough for your sake?

Anatol. Dearest! (*Kisses her hand*)

Elsa. My dear Anatol!

Anatol. What is it, love? (ELSA *signifies with a gesture and a smile that she must be going*) You mean——

Elsa. I must go.

Anatol. You must?

Elsa. I must.

Anatol. You must?—now?—very well, go. (*He moves away from her*)

Elsa. You're impossible today.

Anatol. Yes—I'm impossible today. (*Pacing the room*) Don't you understand that this life will drive me mad?

Elsa. Is that my thanks?

Anatol. Thanks? Thanks for what? Haven't I given you as much as you gave me? Do I love you any less than you love me? Do I make you any less happy than you make me?—love—madness—pain—but gratitude?—where does that stupid word come from anyway?

Elsa. Then you don't think I have earned—not even a little bit of gratitude from you? I, who have sacrificed everything for you?

Anatol. Sacrificed? I don't want any sacrifices. If it was a sacrifice then you never loved me.

Elsa. I never loved him? And I betrayed my husband for his sake—I never loved him?

Anatol. I didn't say that.

Elsa. Oh, what have I done?

Anatol (*standing in front of her*). Oh, what have I done? This brilliant remark was the only thing lacking. What have you done? I'll tell you. You were a silly girl seven years ago and then you married because it was the thing to do. You went on your wedding trip to Venice—you were happy——

Elsa. Never!

Anatol. Happy—in Venice—on Lake Como—it was love—in certain moments anyway.

Elsa. Never.

Anatol. What! Didn't he kiss you?—embrace you? Weren't you his wife? Then you returned—and you found everything tiresome—that's natural—you were pretty—attractive—and a woman—— And he was merely a blockhead. Then came the years of coquetry—I am taking for granted it was only coquetry—you told me that you had never loved anyone before me. I can't prove that, but I will take it for granted; because I should dislike the alternative.

Elsa. Anatol—I? coquet?

Anatol. Yes, coquet—and what does it mean to be coquet? It means to be a wanton and a liar at the same time.

Elsa. And was I—that?

Anatol. You were. Then came years of struggle—you wavered—you thought "shall I never experience my romance?" You grew more beautiful—your husband more tiresome, stupid and ugly—it had to come finally—you took a lover. I happened to be that lover.

Elsa. Happened to be? You!

Anatol. Yes, happened to be—but if I hadn't been there it would have been somebody else. You felt unhappy in your marriage or at least not sufficiently happy—you wanted to be loved. You flirted a little with me—you talked about the grand passion—and one fine day when you noticed some friend driving past in her carriage—or perhaps a cocotte in a box near you at the theatre, then you thought to yourself, "why shouldn't I have a little pleasure, too?" and so you became mine. What have you done? That is all you have done, and I don't see why you should use any big phrases for this little adventure.

Elsa. Anatol—adventure?

Anatol. Yes.

Elsa. Take back what you have just said—I implore you.

Anatol. I don't know what I should take back. That is all it was for you.

Elsa. You really believe that?

Anatol. Yes.

Elsa. Very well—I must go.

Anatol. You can go. I sha'n't detain you. (*There is a pause*)

Elsa. You send me away?

Anatol. I?—send you away? And two minutes ago you said, "I must go."

Elsa. But I must—Anatol. Can't you see——

Anatol (*with decision*). Elsa!

Elsa. What is it?

Anatol. Elsa! You love me? You said so?

Elsa. I said it. For pity's sake what further proofs do you demand of me?

Anatol. Do you want to know? Good! I may believe that you love me——

Elsa. May believe? You say that today——

Anatol. You love me?

Elsa. I adore you.

Anatol. Then—stay with me.

Elsa. What?

Anatol. Go away with me—yes—with me. To another city—to another world—I want to be alone with you.

Elsa. What an idea!

Anatol. It would be the one natural thing—how can I let you go away—go to him—how could I ever let you go? How can you do it yourself—you who adore me? You go from my arms, still hot from my kisses, you go back into that house which must feel strange to you since you have belonged to me. We have made the best of it—we haven't even thought how monstrous it is. It's impossible to go on living this way. Elsa, Elsa, won't you come with me?—you don't answer—Elsa! To Sicily—anywhere you wish—across the ocean if you will—Elsa!

Elsa. What are you saying?

Anatol. With nobody ever between us again—across the ocean, Elsa,—we'll be alone——

Elsa. Across the ocean?

Anatol. Wherever you wish.

Elsa. You dear, sweet—child——

Anatol. Do you hesitate?

Elsa. Why listen, dearest—why should we need that?

Anatol. Need what?

Elsa. To go away—it isn't at all necessary—we can see each other here almost as often as we would like to.

Anatol. Almost as often as we'd like to—yes—it isn't necessary.

Elsa. These are fancies——

Anatol. You're quite right. (*There is a pause*)

Elsa. Are you angry? (*Clock strikes*)

Anatol. You must go.

Elsa. For heaven's sake—how late it is!

Anatol. Yes, you had better go.

Elsa. Tomorrow then. I'll be here at six o'clock.

Anatol. Just as you say.

Elsa. Aren't you going to kiss me?

Anatol. Oh, yes.

Elsa. I'll make it all up to you tomorrow.

Anatol (*accompanies her to the door*). Good-bye.

Elsa (*at the door*). One kiss more.

Anatol. Why not? There. (*He kisses her. She goes out*)

Anatol (*coming back into the room*). With that kiss I have made her what she deserves to be—just one more. (*He shivers*) It's all so stupid.

ANATOL'S WEDDING MORNING

CHARACTERS

Anatol

Max

Ilona

Franz (servant)

ANATOL'S WEDDING MORNING

A tastefully decorated bachelor apartment: a door, right, leads into the vestibule; a door to the left, with curtains, into the bedroom. ANATOL, *in house jacket, comes on tiptoe from the room left, and shuts the door gently. He sits down on a couch and presses a button, a bell rings.* FRANZ *comes from R. and goes to the door L. without noticing* ANATOL. ANATOL *does not see him at first, then runs after him and stops him before he opens the door.*

Anatol. Why are you sneaking in like that? I didn't hear you.

Franz. What do you wish, sir?

Anatol. Bring the samovar.

Franz. Yes, sir. (*Goes out*)

Anatol. Softly, you blockhead—can't you walk more softly? (*Tiptoes to the door L., opens it slightly*) She's asleep—she's still asleep. (*He closes the door*)

Franz (*brings the samovar*). Two cups, sir?

Anatol. Yes. (*The bell rings*) Who's that so early? (FRANZ *goes out*)

Anatol. I certainly don't feel like getting married this morning. I wish I could send a regret. (FRANZ *opens the door R., letting in* MAX)

Max (*affectionately*). My dear boy!

Anatol. Hush! Be quiet! Bring another cup, Franz!

Max. But there's two cups there already.

Anatol. Bring another cup, Franz, and now get out. (FRANZ *goes out*) There—and now my dear man, what brings you here at eight o'clock in the morning?

Max. It's ten o'clock.

Anatol. Then what brings you here at ten o'clock in the morning?

Max. My poor memory.

Anatol. Speak more softly, please.

Max. Why? Are you so nervous?

Anatol. I am—very nervous.

Max. You shouldn't be nervous today.

Anatol. Well, what do you want?

Max. You know I'm to have your pretty cousin Alma for a partner——

Anatol (*sadly*). Yes, yes.

Max. Well, I forgot to order flowers—and I really don't know what color dress she'll wear—will it be white or pink or blue or green?

Anatol (*peevish*). Not green anyway.

Max. Why not?

Anatol. Alma never wears green.

Max (*piqued*). How should I know that?

Anatol (*as before*). Don't scream so! We can talk it over calmly, can't we?

Max. Then you don't know what color dress she'll wear?

Anatol. Pink or blue.

Max. But there's quite a difference between pink and blue.

Anatol. Pink or blue—what does it matter?

Max. It matters a good deal, for the flowers I order.

Anatol. Order two bouquets—then you can put the other one in your own buttonhole.

Max. I didn't come here to listen to any of your poor jokes.

Anatol. I'll make the worst one yet at two o'clock today.

Max. You're in a nice mood for your wedding morning.

Anatol. I'm nervous.

Max. You're hiding something from me.

Anatol. No.

Ilona (*voice from the bedroom*). Anatol! (MAX *looks at* ANATOL *in surprise*)

Anatol. Excuse me a moment. (*He goes to the door of the bedroom and disappears behind it.* MAX *looks after him with wide eyes.* ANATOL *kisses* ILONA, *near the door, but where they cannot be seen by* MAX, *closes the door and comes into the room again*)

Max (*indignant*). People don't do those things——

Anatol. Hear my story first, Max, and then judge.

Max. I hear a feminine voice and I judge—that you're beginning early to deceive your wife.

Anatol. Now sit down here and listen to me—and then you'll talk differently.

Max. Never! I'm no paragon of virtue—but—but this——

Anatol. Then you won't listen to me?

Max. Go ahead—but be quick—I'm invited to your wedding. (*They both sit down*)

Anatol (*sadly*). Yes.

Max (*impatiently*). Well?

Anatol. Well? There was a Wedding-Eve Party last night at the home of my future parents-in-law.

Max. I know. I was there.

Anatol. Quite right. You were there—there were a lot of people there—they were very gay—drank champagne—spoke toasts——

Max. Yes, so did I—to your happiness.

Anatol. Yes, so did you—to my happiness. (*Presses his hand*) I thank you.

Max. You did that yesterday.

Anatol. Well, we were quite gay until midnight.

Max. Which I know.

Anatol. For a moment I almost thought I was happy.

Max. After the fourth glass of champagne.

Anatol (*sadly*). No. Not until after the sixth—that's awfully sad—I can scarcely believe it.

Max. We've discussed that already.

Anatol. And that young man was there, too—I feel certain that he was a school-girl love of my bride-to-be.

Max. Oh, yes—young Ralmen.

Anatol. A poet of sorts I believe. One of those men

who seem destined to be the first love of so many women and never the last love of any.

Max. I wish you'd come to the point.

Anatol. Of course, it was a matter of indifference to me—I laughed at him. The party broke up about midnight. I bade my bride-to-be farewell with a kiss—she kissed me also—coldly. I shivered as I went downstairs.

Max. Ah ha!

Anatol. One or the other stopped at the gate to congratulate me. Uncle Edward was decidedly drunk and insisted on embracing me. Some young man started a college song. Her former love, the poet I mean, disappeared into a side street with his coat collar turned up. Someone teased me—said I'd probably spend the rest of the night in front of the belovèd one's window—I smiled in scorn—it had begun to snow—people scattered finally—and I stood alone.

Max (*condolingly*). Oh!

Anatol (*warming up*). Yes, I stood alone on the street—in the cold winter night, while the snow whirled its great flakes around me. It was—it was shuddery——

Max. Won't you please tell me where you went?

Anatol (*grandly*). Where I had to go—to the Redoute.

Max. Oh!

Anatol. You are surprised!

Max. I can imagine the rest of it now.

Anatol. Not quite. As I stood there in the cold winter night-

Max. Shivering-

Anatol. Freezing, it came over me then with a mighty rush of pain,—the thought that from now on I should no longer be a free man—that I must bid farewell forever to my mad, sweet bachelor days. This is the last night, I said to myself, the last night in which I can come home without being asked where I have been—the last night of freedom—of adventuring—of love, perhaps——

Max. Oh——

Anatol. And then suddenly I found myself in the midst of the turmoil—silk and satin garments rustled about me, eyes sparkled, masks nodded mysteriously, gleaming shoulders threw out their fragrance—the whole mad carnival breathed and whirled about me. I sucked it in—I bathed in it.

Max. Get to the point, please—we haven't much time.

Anatol. The crowd pushed me forward and as I had excited my brain before, now I excited all of my senses with the perfumes that swirled around me. It seemed to rush over me as never before—it was as if the carnival were giving me its own festival of farewell.

Max. I'm waiting for the third excitant.

Anatol. That came soon—the intoxication of the heart.

Max. Of the senses.

Anatol. Of the heart—of the senses, too, possibly. Do you remember Katharine?

Max. Oh, Katherine?

Anatol. Hush!

Max (*with a gesture towards the bedroom*). Is—is it she?

Anatol. No—but she was there, too, and then a charming brunette whose name I won't mention—and then Theodore's little blonde Lizzie—but Theodore wasn't there. I recognized them all in spite of their masks, from their voice or their walk or some gesture. But there was just one that I didn't recognize at first—it was queer—I followed her—or she followed me. Her figure seemed so familiar—we kept meeting everywhere—at the fountain—at the buffet—beside the proscenium—everywhere. Finally she took my arm and I knew who she was. (*Pointing to the door*) She——

Max. An old friend?

Anatol. Why, man, don't you suspect? You know what I told her six weeks ago when I became engaged—the same old story: "I'm going away—I'll be back soon. I'll love you forever."

Max. Ilona?

Anatol. Hush!

Max. Not Ilona?

Anatol. Yes, keep quiet. "You're here again," she whispered in my ear. "Yes," I replied aptly. "When?" "This evening"—"Why no letters?" "Bad postal connections." "Where?" "Inhospitable village." "But now?"—"happy—here again—ever faithful." "Me, too —me, too!" Joy, champagne and more joy——

Max. And more champagne?

Anatol. No, no more champagne. And then when we drove home in the cab—just as we used to—she leaned on my shoulder—"We'll never part again," she said.

Max (*rising*). Wake up, boy, and make an end of it.

Anatol. We'll never part. (*Rising*) And I'm to be married at two o'clock.

Max. To another.

Anatol. Why, yes—one always marries the other.

Max (*looking at the clock*). It's high time. (*Gesture*)

Anatol. I'll see if she's ready. (*Stops at the door, turns to* MAX) But it's really sad, isn't it?

Max. It's immoral.

Anatol. It's sad, too.

Max. Do go in. (ANATOL *opens the door just as* ILONA *looks in and then comes in. She wears a handsome domino*)

Ilona. Oh! It's only Max.

Max (*bowing*). Only Max.

Ilona (*to* ANATOL). Why didn't you tell me? I thought it was a stranger or I should have joined you long ago. How are you, Max? And what do you say to this rascal?

Max. That's just about what he is.

Ilona. Here I've been weeping for him for six weeks and he was—where were you?

Anatol (*with a large gesture*). Over there.

Ilona. Didn't he write to you, either? But now I have him again—— (*Takes his arm*) Now there'll be

no more of these journeys—and no more partings. Give me a kiss.

Anatol. But——

Ilona. Oh, Max don't count. (*Kisses him*) What an expression! Now I'll pour tea for you two and for myself if you'll permit me.

Anatol. Please do.

Max. My dear Ilona, I'm sorry I can't accept your invitation to breakfast, and I don't quite understand——

Ilona (*busy with the samovar*). What don't you understand?

Max. Anatol ought to——

Ilona. What ought he——

Max (*to* ANATOL). You ought to be dressed by this time.

Ilona. Don't be silly, Max. We're going to stay home today—we sha'n't set a foot out of the house.

Anatol. My dear child—that won't be quite possible.

Ilona. Oh, yes, that'll be possible.

Anatol. But I'm invited——

Ilona (*pouring out tea*). Send a regret.

Max. He can't—this time.

Anatol. I'm—I'm invited to a wedding. (MAX *encourages him with a gesture*)

Ilona. That's not important.

Anatol. It is, this time—I'm in the wedding party.

Ilona. And does the lady you escort love you?

Max. That's quite unessential.

Ilona. But I do love him and that's very essential. I wish you wouldn't butt in.

Anatol. My dear girl—I must go.

Max. Yes, he must. You can believe him—he must.

Anatol. You can certainly let me off for a few hours, can't you?

Ilona. Please sit down—both of you. How many lumps, Max?

Max. Three, please.

Ilona (*to* ANATOL). And you?

Anatol. But it's really high time——

Ilona. How many lumps?

Anatol. You know—two.
Ilona. Cream? Rum?
Anatol. Rum—you ought to know that—too.
Ilona (*to* MAX). Rum and two lumps of sugar—fine principles he has!
Max. I must go.
Anatol (*aside to him*). Don't leave me alone.
Ilona. Finish your tea, Max.
Anatol. Child, I must get dressed now.
Ilona. Oh, for goodness' sake, when is this fool wedding?
Max. In two hours.
Ilona. You're invited, too?
Max. Yes.
Ilona. Is he an usher, too?
Anatol. Yes, he is.
Ilona. Who's getting married?
Anatol. You don't know him.
Ilona. What's his name? It can't be a secret.
Anatol. It is a secret.
Ilona. What?
Anatol. It's a secret wedding.
Ilona. With ushers and bridesmaids? How ridiculous!
Max. It's—it's the parents who mustn't know anything about it.
Ilona (*drinking her tea*). Boys, you're lying to me.
Max. Oh, no.
Ilona. Lord knows where you two are going today. However, you're not going—that is—of course Max can go wherever he wants to—— (*To* ANATOL) But you stay here.
Anatol. It's impossible—I can't possibly stay away from my best friend's wedding.
Ilona (*to* MAX). Shall I let him go?
Max. Dear Ilona—you really must——
Ilona. What church is it at?
Anatol (*uneasy*). Why do you ask?
Ilona. I thought I'd like to look in on it.
Max. I'm afraid that isn't possible.

Ilona. And why not?

Anatol. Because this ceremony takes place in a—in a subterranean chapel.

Ilona. There must be some way to get there.

Anatol. No—that is—of course there's a way to get there.

Ilona. I'd like to see your bridesmaid, Anatol—I'm jealous of her. I've heard of marriages that have grown out of these wedding parties. And you must understand one thing, Anatol, I won't have you getting married.

Max. What would you do if—if he did get married?

Ilona (*quite calmly*). I'd break up the ceremony.

Anatol. Indeed!

Max. How would you do that?

Ilona. I haven't quite made up my mind—I might make a disturbance in front of the church door——

Max. That would be commonplace.

Ilona. Oh, I'd find some new touch.

Max. For instance?

Ilona. I might drive up dressed as a bride—with a wreath and veil—that would be novel, wouldn't it?

Max. Decidedly. (*Rises*) Well, I must go now—good-bye, Anatol.

Anatol (*rising, very determined*). You must excuse me, Ilona, I shall have to get dressed. It's the very last minute.

Franz (*comes in carrying bouquet*). The flowers, sir——

Ilona. What flowers?

Franz (*looks at* ILONA *with surprise, and with a certain familiarity*). The flowers, sir.

Ilona. You still have Franz? (FRANZ *goes out*) I thought you'd put him out.

Max. That isn't always easy. (ANATOL *stands holding the flowers, which are wrapped in tissue paper*)

Ilona. Let me see your flowers.

Max. Is that the bouquet for your bridesmaid?

Ilona (*opening the paper*). This is a bridal bouquet!

Anatol. Good heavens! They've sent me the wrong

flowers—Franz—Franz! (*Runs out with the flowers*)

Max. And the poor bridegroom won't have any.

Anatol (*coming in again*). Franz is after him.

Max. You'll excuse me now, won't you? I really must go.

Anatol (*going to the door with him*). What shall I do?

Max. Confess.

Anatol. Impossible!

Max. Well, I'll come back as soon as I can.

Anatol. Please do.

Max. And my color——

Anatol. Blue or pink. I have a feeling it will be one or the other—good-bye.

Max. Good-bye, Ilona. (*Aside to* ANATOL) I'll be back in an hour. (ANATOL *comes back into the room.* ILONA *runs into his arms*)

Ilona. At last! Oh, I'm so happy!

Anatol (*mechanically*). My angel!

Ilona. You're so cold.

Anatol. I just said "my angel," didn't I?

Ilona. And you really have to go to this stupid wedding?

Anatol. Seriously, dear, I must.

Ilona. Well, I tell you. . . . I'll drive with you in the cab as far as the lady's house——

Anatol. That's an absurd idea! We'll meet this evening. You'll have to be at the theatre.

Ilona. I'll send them word I can't play.

Anatol. No, no, I'll call for you. Now I must change my clothes. (*Looks at the clock*) How the time flies! Franz! Franz!

Ilona. What do you want?

Anatol (*to* FRANZ *who comes in*). Have you laid out my clothes?

Franz. Yes, sir, I'll see if it's all right, sir. (*Goes into bedroom*)

Anatol (*pacing the room*). This evening, Ilona, after the theatre, eh?

Ilona. I'd like to stay with you all day today.

Anatol. Now don't be childish—I have other obligations—you ought to understand that.

Ilona. I love you—that's all I can understand.

Anatol. It is absolutely necessary——

Franz (*from bedroom*). Everything is ready, sir. (*Goes out*)

Anatol. Good. (*Goes into the bedroom, talks from behind the door while* ILONA *remains in the sitting-room*) I mean—it is absolutely necessary that you should understand these things.

Ilona. You're really changing your clothes?

Anatol. I can't go to a wedding this way.

Ilona. Why do you go anyway?

Anatol. Beginning again? I must go.

Ilona. Then we'll meet this evening?

Anatol. Yes, I'll wait for you at the stage door.

Ilona. Don't be late.

Anatol. No—why should I be late?

Ilona. Don't you remember—I waited for you a whole hour once.

Anatol. Did you? I don't remember. (*There is a pause*)

Ilona (*strolls about the room looking at things*). Say, Anatol, you've got a new picture here.

Anatol. Do you like it?

Ilona. I know so little about pictures.

Anatol. It's a very fine picture.

Ilona. Did you bring that back with you?

Anatol. Bring back? Where from?

Ilona. Why—from your trip.

Anatol. Yes, that's so—from my trip—no, it's a present. (*Pause*)

Ilona. Say, Anatol——

Anatol (*nervously*). What!

Ilona. Where were you anyway?

Anatol. I told you all about it.

Ilona. You haven't told me a word.

Anatol. Yes, I did, last night.

Ilona. Then I've forgotten it again.

Anatol. I was—I was, oh, near Bohemia——

Ilona. What were you doing in Bohemia?

Anatol. I wasn't in Bohemia—only near there.

Ilona. Oh, you were invited for the hunting?

Anatol. Yes, I was shooting hares.

Ilona. For six weeks?

Anatol. Continually.

Ilona. Why didn't you say good-bye to me?

Anatol. I didn't want to make you unhappy.

Ilona. Anatol, you wanted to shake me.

Anatol. Absurd.

Ilona. Oh, you tried it once before.

Anatol. Tried it? Yes—but without success.

Ilona. What? What's that?

Anatol. Why, yes—I tried to tear myself away from you—you know it.

Ilona. It was nonsense—you can't tear yourself away from me.

Anatol. Ha! Ha!

Ilona. What's that?

Anatol. I remarked "Ha! ha!"

Ilona. You needn't laugh, my dear, you came back to me then.

Anatol. Yes, then——

Ilona. And you will this time, too—you love me.

Anatol. Unfortunately——

Ilona. What?

Anatol (*shouting*). Unfortunately.

Ilona. You're mighty brave when you're in another room. You wouldn't dare say that to my face.

Anatol (*opens the door, looks in*). Unfortunately!

Ilona (*starting to door*). What does that mean?

Anatol (*in the bedroom again*). That means—that it can't go on like this forever.

Ilona. And now I say, "Ha! ha!"

Anatol. What!

Ilona (*pulling the door open*). Ha! Ha!

Anatol. Shut that door. (*She shuts the door*)

Ilona. No, my dear boy. You love me and you'll never be able to leave me.

Anatol. Do you think so?

Ilona. I know it.

Anatol. You know it?

Ilona. I feel it.

Anatol. You think that I'll lie at your feet forever?

Ilona. You'll never marry—I know that.

Anatol. You're quite crazy, my dear. I love you—that's all right—but we're not bound for eternity.

Ilona. You think I'll give you up?

Anatol. You'll have to sometime.

Ilona. Have to? When?

Anatol. When I marry.

Ilona (*drumming on the door*). And when will that be, my dear?

Anatol (*mockingly*). Very soon, my dear.

Ilona (*excited*). When?

Anatol. Stop that drumming—I'll be married long before the year is out.

Ilona. You're an idiot.

Anatol. I might be married in two months even.

Ilona. Oh, indeed—I suppose there's somebody waiting for you?

Anatol. Yes, there's somebody waiting for me at this very minute.

Ilona. In two months then?

Anatol. You seem to doubt it.

(ILONA *laughs*)

Anatol. You needn't laugh. I'll be married in a week. (*She laughs still more*) Don't laugh, I say. (ILONA *sinks back on the coach, laughing.* ANATOL *comes out fully dressed*) Don't laugh——

Ilona (*laughing*). When did you say you're going to get married?

Anatol. Today.

Ilona (*looking at him*). When?

Anatol. Today, my dear.

Ilona (*rising*). Stop joking, Anatol.

Anatol. It's dead earnest, my dear. I'm marrying today.

Ilona. Are you crazy?

Anatol (*calls*). Franz!

Franz (*comes in*). Yes, sir.

Anatol. My flowers. (FRANZ *goes out*)

Ilona (*threateningly*). Anatol—— (FRANZ *comes in with the flowers.* ILONA *turns and sees him, makes a grab for the flowers.* ANATOL *catches them quickly,* FRANZ *goes out with a broad smile*)

Ilona. Oh—not really——

Anatol. As you see. (*She tries to take the flowers from him*) What are are you doing? (*He retreats before her, she chases him around the room*)

Ilona. You wretch—you wretch! (MAX *comes in carrying a bunch of roses, stands by the door astonished.* ANATOL *takes refuge on an armchair, holding his flowers out of* ILONA'S *reach*)

Anatol. Help! Max, help me! (MAX *hurries to* ILONA, *tries to hold her back, she turns on him, seizes his flowers, throws them on the floor and stamps on them*)

Max. Ilona—you're crazy—my flowers—what shall I do?

(ILONA *begins to cry bitterly, sinks on a chair*)

Anatol (*still behind his chair, embarrassed*). She made me angry—you can cry now, Ilona—of course. Why did you laugh at me? She laughed at me, Max—she said I didn't dare marry—so, of course, I'm going to get married—just out of opposition. (*Starts to climb down off the chair*)

Ilona. You hypocrite—you deceiver! (ANATOL *climbs up on the chair again*)

Max (*picking up the flowers*). My poor flowers!

Ilona. I really meant to spoil his. But you don't deserve any better—you're his accomplice.

Anatol (*still on the chair*). Do be sensible!

Ilona. Yes, that's what you always say when you've driven a woman mad. But you shall see—that'll be a nice wedding—just you wait. (*Rises*) Good-bye.

Anatol (*jumping off the chair*). Where are you going?

Ilona. You'll find out soon enough.

Anatol and Max. Where are you going?

Ilona. Let me go.

Anatol and Max (*standing between her and the door*). Ilona, what are you going to do? Ilona, where are you going——?

Ilona. Let me go, I say.

Anatol. Do be sensible—calm down a bit.

Ilona. You won't let me go? (*She dashes about the room, dashes the tea-things off the table in her anger, throws pillows about, etc.* ANATOL *and* MAX *stand helpless*)

Anatol. Now I ask you—does a man have to marry when he's loved like that? (*Her outburst over,* ILONA *sinks down on the couch and sobs. There is a pause*)

Anatol. She's calmer now.

Max. We must go—and I haven't any flowers.

Franz (*comes in*). The carriage is there, sir. (*Goes out*)

Anatol. The carriage—the carriage—what shall I do? (*Comes up behind* ILONA, *kisses her hair*) Ilona!

Max (*on her other side*). Ilona! (*She weeps silently with her handkerchief to her face.* MAX *speaks aside to* ANATOL) Go now and leave her to me.

Anatol. I really ought to go—but how can I?

Max. Go!

Anatol. How can you get her away? Do you think you can do it?

Max. I'll whisper to you during the ceremony, "Everything arranged," and you'll know I've done it.

Anatol. I'm so worried.

Max. Go now. (ANATOL *turns to go, comes back on tiptoe, presses a light kiss on* ILONA'S *hair, then goes out quickly.* MAX *sits down opposite* ILONA. *She still sobs, with her handkerchief before her face*)

Max (*looking at the clock*). Hm——

Ilona (*looking about as if just awakening*). Where is he?

Max (*takes both her hands*). Ilona——

Ilona (*rising*). Where is he?

Max (*still holding her hands*). You won't find him.

Ilona. Oh, yes, I will.

Max. You're a sensible girl, Ilona. You don't want to make a scandal.

Ilona. Let me go—where is the wedding?

Max. That doesn't matter.

Ilona. I'm going there—I must go there.

Max. Oh, no, you won't. What an idea!

Ilona. To treat me so—to deceive me so——

Max. It was no deception—it's just life.

Ilona. Oh, shut up—I hate your phrases.

Max. Now you're childish, Ilona, or you'd see that all this is so useless.

Ilona. Useless?

Max. It's absurd.

Ilona. Absurd?

Max. You'd only make yourself ridiculous.

Ilona. Now you're insulting me, too.

Max. You'll console yourself.

Ilona. You don't know me.

Max. Suppose he was going to America?

Ilona. What do you mean by that?

Max. Suppose he were really lost to you?

Ilona. What do you mean?

Max. The main point is this—that it's not *you* who is deceived. (*She looks her question*) He can come back to you—it will be the other who is forsaken.

Ilona. Oh! Is that—— (*She looks up with an expression of wild joy*)

Max. How noble you are! (*Pressing her hand*)

Ilona. I'll have my revenge—that's why I'm so delighted at what you said.

Max. Then you are one of those who bite—when they love?

Ilona. Yes, I am.

Max. Now you are really grand!—a woman who would avenge her whole sex on us——

Ilona. Yes, that's just what I will do.

Max (*rising*). I have just time to take you home. (*Aside*) I'm not taking any chances. (*Offering her his arm*) And now bid farewell to these rooms.

Ilona. Not farewell—I shall come back.

Max. You believe yourself a demon and yet you're only a woman. (*At a gesture from her*) But that is quite enough. (*Opening the door*) If you please, fair lady.

Ilona (*turning back at the door, with affected grandezza*) I will come back. (*Out with* MAX)

LIVING HOURS

A PLAY CYCLE BY

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

Englished by Grace Isabel Colbron

LIVING HOURS

CHARACTERS

Anton Hausdorfer

Heinrich

Borromäus, gardener

LIVING HOURS

A carefully tended little garden in a suburb of Vienna. A small house fills the right side of the stage, the veranda towards the garden. Three steps lead down from the veranda. Under a spreading tree on the left side of the stage, down towards the front, is a little table surrounded by several chairs, one of them a comfortable armchair. A high iron railing running from the left side at back over to the house, separates the garden from the street. Beyond are the trees and grassy stretches of a park. It is early Autumn, near the close of day. Deep stillness broods over the garden. BORROMÄUS, *the gardener, is working at a flower-bed. He is an old man with rather longish gray hair.* ANTON HAUSDORFER *comes slowly down the steps from the veranda.* HAUSDORFER *is nearly sixty, smooth-shaven with close-cut, gray hair but young eyes. He wears a quiet dark suit, easy in fit, but well made, and a broad-brimmed, dark straw hat.*

Hausdorfer. Good evening, Borromäus.

Borromäus. Good evening, sir. You've been to the city this afternoon, haven't you, sir?

Hausdorfer. No.

Borromäus. I thought maybe, sir, because you didn't take your coffee out here in the arbor this afternoon either.

Hausdorfer. No, I did not go to town. I was in the house, lying on the sofa. I had a bit of a headache. What are you doing now? You'll soon have the entire garden turned over.

Borromäus. Surely, sir, it's quite necessary. We may have a frost any night now. I'm not lettin' these mild

nights deceive me, once it's October. Do you remember the Autumn of '93, sir? We sat outdoors that evening—the 28th of October it was, and next morning at three there was a heavy frost. And in '87 and '88 it was the same way. No, sir, I'm not lettin' these fine days deceive me.

Hausdorfer. Quite right, Borromäus. (*He looks on at the work*) And what shall we plant here now? (*He falls into deep thought and pays little heed to the answer*)

Borromäus. Just what I wanted to talk to you about, sir. I went over to see Franz today——

Hausdorfer (*absently*). Who?

Borromäus (*surprised*). Why, Franz, sir,—Baron Weiseneck's gardener across the way. He thinks a bit of himself but he knows a bit, too. He's studied it all in books, twenty or more of them he has on his shelf, so I don't mind askin' him a question now and then——

Hausdorfer (*he has not been listening*). Yes, yes,—you ought to do that——

Borromäus. Do what, sir?

Hausdorfer. Whatever he told you. I'm quite willing you should.

Borromäus (*still more surprised*). But, sir, I haven't said anything yet——

Hausdorfer (*as before*). It will be the right thing to do, no doubt.

Borromäus (*now quite alarmed*). Why, sir——

Hausdorfer (*as if awakening*). What is it?

Borromäus. Oh, sir, I understand—if I may take the liberty of asking, sir—I'm sure it's that Mrs. Councillor is worse again. (HAUSDORFER *does not answer,* BORROMÄUS *becomes embarrassed*) I thought maybe, sir, since it's over three weeks that the lady was out here the last time——

Hausdorfer. She is dead—I thank you for your sympathy—Mrs. Councillor is dead. (*He sits down by the table*)

Borromäus (*startled, pulls off his cap hastily*) Oh—sir—— (*There is a pause*)

Hausdorfer. Yes. She will never come out here again to see us.

Borromäus. Is it possible, sir! I didn't think the lady was as ill as that. (*Shakes his head*) And quite a young lady one might almost say.

Hausdorfer. Young, Borromäus? Well, she *was* seven years younger than I. But then I'm nearly sixty.

Borromäus. Yes, that's true, sir.

Hausdorfer. Still, people do live longer than that.

Borromäus. You see, sir, it's because I saw Mrs. Councillor so often, almost every day it seems like now, in these fifteen or twenty years——

Hausdorfer. Yes, we were all younger twenty years ago.

Borromäus. But even this last year, sir, she didn't look like an old lady. And this summer, when she grew so pale and thin—anyone would have thought—why, one evening, sir, when I went past the gate late and saw her sitting here, I really thought—beggin' your pardon, sir, I thought it must be Mrs. Councillor's younger sister.

Hausdorfer (*after a short pause*). Well, Borromäus, and what did our arrogant friend Franz have to say?

Borromäus. Oh, no, sir, I won't bother you with such things now. (*Kisses his hand*) I know what it means, sir, I had a wife once and—buried her. (*He is suddenly frightened at what he has said*) That is—I meant, sir——

Hausdorfer. I understand, Borromäus. (*There is another pause*)

Borromäus. And the young gentleman, sir?

Hausdorfer. Who?

Borromäus. Young Mr. Heinrich, sir. Oh, dear, it's too dreadful! When I think how he used to bring his mother out here all this last year, and then come for her again in the evening——

Hausdorfer. Yes, he's greatly to be pitied.

Borromäus. Is he ill himself, sir, that he doesn't come out here?

Hausdorfer. No, no, I expect him any day. He has been away, traveling. But he should return any day.

now. He had to rest a little—to brighten himself up—he has to work again.

Borromäus. Yes, sir, when a man has his calling——

Hausdorfer. And such a calling—a poet! (*He rises*) A poet! Do you know what that means?

Borromäus. Why, yes, sir——

Hausdorfer. No, you don't—you don't know anything about it. We don't know anything about it at all,—we ordinary mortals, who can do nothing but putter about in our gardens——

Borromäus. Oh, sir, but you once had——

Hausdorfer. You mean, I had something else to do once upon a time? But it wasn't any better than what I'm doing now. I sat at a desk in an office, in the city, from eight o'clock until two, sometimes even until three or four.

Borromäus. It must be right hard to sit in one spot for six hours every day. I've often felt sorry for you, sir, in those days, when you couldn't get out here until so late. And when it was Winter——

Hausdorfer. One has to do something, Borromäus. Another man has my desk now, and if he sticks at it as long as I did he'll get his pension, too, and someone else will fall into his place. It matters so little who sits there, anyone would do. But a poet—he's a different sort of being from you and me, Borromäus. When *he* retires it may be a long, long time before anyone comes to fill his place. A poet must take good care of himself, he owes it to the world—you understand that, Borromäus?

Borromäus. Why, yes, sir.

Hausdorfer. No, you don't—you don't understand it at all. Have you noticed anything queer about Heinrich?—anything unusual? Have you never noticed the halo around his head? No? Well, there you see, you don't understand it at all. (BORROMÄUS *laughs, then looks serious*) Don't worry about me, Borromäus. I'm not losing my mind. I don't mean a real halo, only an imaginary one. You couldn't see it—nor could I—but his mother saw it.

Borromäus. Yes, I know what you mean, sir. You

mean the papers say so much about Mr. Heinrich, although he's so young yet—and because people talk about him—and that's it, isn't it? (*He draws his hand around his head as if describing a halo.* HEINRICH, *dressed in deep mourning, passes back of the fence. He bows and goes on into the house.* HAUSDORFER *looks after him and* BORROMÄUS *follows* HAUSDORFER'S *glance with his eyes*)

Hausdorfer. Here he comes. (*He remains seated, silent*)

Borromäus. If you please, sir—I haven't had any chance yet to tell the young gentleman how sorry I am—— (HEINRICH *comes out onto the veranda from the house*)

Hausdorfer. Go and tell him now—tell him you are sorry for him. (BORROMÄUS *goes to meet* HEINRICH *who comes down the steps into the garden and takes the old man's hand*)

Heinrich. Thank you, Borromäus—I understand. I thank you. (BORROMÄUS *goes out R. softly, as* HEINRICH *comes down towards the table.* HAUSDORFER *rises now, goes a step or two to meet him and takes his hand*)

Hausdorfer. You've come home again?

Heinrich. Yes, sooner than I thought. It is better at home——

Hausdorfer (*nods*). You went away—that same evening?

Heinrich. Yes. I went home from the cemetery, packed my bag and left. I couldn't have endured the night in the house.

Hausdorfer. I can understand. Where did you go?

Heinrich. I went to Salzburg first.

Hausdorfer. Indeed?

Heinrich. I've always felt happy there. It's a consoling town——

Hausdorfer. Are there such towns? That would be fortunate.

Heinrich. There are such towns—under certain conditions. I did not go to Salzburg on a mere chance. I had an experience once, seven or eight years ago—tragic, or, at least, painful—you know Mr. Hausdorfer. one of

those affairs—well, I thought I would never get over it. I went away, and I went to Salzburg. And that very afternoon, during a solitary stroll in Hellbrunn, in the charming Roccoco garden, I felt my pain lighten. Next morning I awoke strong and well—and could work again.

Hausdorfer. Is it possible?

Heinrich. Of course, I was scarcely twenty then, and it was Springtime—you have to take that into consideration.

Hausdorfer. Yes—that's true.

Heinrich. But this time I found no comfort—nothing—rather the contrary.

Hausdorfer. Then there are times when Hellbrunn cannot heal? How long did you stay in Salzburg?

Heinrich. I left the next day—left for Munich. I hoped for the quieting influence of the old pictures. I went to the old Pinakothek where my beloved Dürers and Holbeins hang—and there, for the first time in many, many months, I seemed to feel relief. (*There is a pause*) You don't mind my telling you all this, do you? I feel a real need to talk it all out with you——

Hausdorfer (takes his hand, speaks more kindly than before). Please do——

Heinrich. Thank you. (*He sits down*) You see, Mr. Hausdorfer, I've—I've felt it deeply—that you and I—during these last years—that we seem to have—to have grown so apart.

Hausdorfer. How do you mean?

Heinrich. I've seen it plainly—that you—that you weren't as fond of me as you were once,—long ago,—when I was a little boy playing on the meadow there.

Hausdorfer. Yes—that was a long time ago, Heinrich. And you must acknowledge that it was you who first—oh, well, it's only natural that you should want to go your own way. It wasn't particularly interesting out here for a young man—you have your own circle of friends. But I have not complained—or have I?

Heinrich. Oh, no. But I wanted you to know how deeply—after this unsuccessful journey, this flight—how deeply I realize that you are nearer to me than anyone

else. You will understand. You know how grateful I must be to you. You were so much to my poor mother—you made her last years of life beautiful!

Hausdorfer (*with a gesture of protest*). Yes—yes—but tell me more about yourself. You went to Munich and you saw the pictures? And they comforted you?

Heinrich. Only as long as I remained in the cool, quiet halls. When I stepped out into the street again, it was all gone. And then the evenings—the long, lonely evenings! I tried to work, to think—impossible! Everything seemed dead within me. (*There is a pause. He rises*) How long will this last, I wonder?

Hausdorfer. It must be distressing—when you're used to regular work——

Heinrich. Used to it? I haven't been—for a long time now. That's just the trouble. I haven't accomplished anything for two or three years. You know——

Hausdorfer. Yes—I know.

Heinrich. It was an absolute impossibility. To see someone you love—your mother, suffering—suffering like that—and to know that there is no hope—and that she knows it—that was the terrible part of it—this knowledge that I could see shining in her eyes when I sat by her bed evenings, reading to her. (*There is a long pause*) I have given up the apartment.

Hausdorfer. You have? Well, it would be too large for you alone.

Heinrich. Apart from that—I could never write a line in those rooms again. Night after night I'd still believe that I could hear that moaning from the next room, that moaning that cut deep into my heart, that robbed me of the power or the desire to work—to live even. Oh, my God—— (*Pause*) Do you know what Dr. Heusser told me the Sunday before her death?

Hausdorfer. What was it?

Heinrich. He said—it might go on—for two or three years more.

Hausdorfer (*with a start that is almost of anger*). Two or three years more? (*Controlling himself*) He said it might go on for two or three years more?——

Heinrich. Yes. And it would have been much worse. She wouldn't have been able to leave her room—she couldn't even have had her few hours out here—here in this garden where she's always been so happy. (*He stands looking down at the empty armchair*)

Hausdorfer. I might have found my way into town occasionally—don't you think?

Heinrich (*with a sense of shame*). Dear Mr. Hausdorfer, here I am talking about myself all this time—I am young—there may be something of a future for me yet—but you—how much you have lost!

Hausdorfer. Yes, I have lost much.

Heinrich. I know how near my mother was to you. I have always known it—even—then—years ago.

Hausdorfer. Even then——

Heinrich. I was not so very little when he—who was my father—left us.

Hausdorfer. Yes—yes.

Heinrich. I can still remember the day mother told me that my papa had gone away. When he did not return I imagined he must be dead and I used to cry bitterly, some nights. Then one day I met him on the street with—the other woman—for whose sake he had deserted my mother. I hid in a doorway that he might not see me—I felt ashamed, child that I was. Oh, yes, I early learned to understand that my mother was free—as free as if she had been widowed.

Hausdorfer. Then—it seems—you have forgiven us?

Heinrich (*slightly offended*). I beg your pardon, I must have expressed myself awkwardly. (*Warmer again*) Why shouldn't we talk naturally and simply about natural, simple things, particularly in a moment like this. I long to press your hand, as a son to a father, for I know how my mother loved you. (*It is now growing dark. The lanterns on the street are lit up one by one*)

Hausdorfer. Love? That would not mean so much. Love comes easily when one is young. We were *friends,* Heinrich, old people and friends. Do you know what that means? Or has the word no meaning yet for such

young ears? Ah, yes, how could you understand it?—you young people—with the world opening before you—the future at your feet—and *you,* just you with your gifts, your prospects—no wonder——

Heinrich. Oh, you are mistaken, Mr. Hausdorfer, I do understand it. If I could bring her back to you—to us—could bring back my poor mother and see her sitting there,—if only just for one evening—what would I not give to do it?

Hausdorfer (bitterly). What *would* you give?

Heinrich (hesitating). I feel now as if I would give my entire future, all I can accomplish, all that I hope to achieve—give it all for that.

Hausdorfer. Heinrich, don't be angry—but—you don't believe that yourself.

Heinrich. If I could do it—if it lay in my power——

Hausdorfer. No, Heinrich, that is not true—even if it lay in your power—I know you—I know you all—I know what you are like—you artists—all of you.

Heinrich. All of us? I do not have to answer for anyone else.

Hausdorfer. No, you do not have to answer for anyone else. But when I say all of you, I know what I mean. There was a man in my office—about ten years ago it was—he occupied himself with music in his leisure hours; something of his was given as a concert by the Choral Society. His name was Franz Thomas. He lost an only child, a boy of seven, handsome and intelligent. I knew him, he used to come to the office with his mother sometimes. Diphtheria killed him one night, and I went to pay my visit of condolence. He—the father—was at the piano playing—and the dead child lay in his coffin in the very same room. He sat there playing and he didn't stop when I came in—he just nodded to me and whispered, when I came up behind him: "Listen to this, Mr. Hausdorfer—this is in memory of my poor boy—the melody just came to me——" and there lay the dead child in its coffin—yes—it turned me cold——

Heinrich (listens with great interest and finally with a sense of satisfaction). Yes—I think I can understand

that many people—many very worthy people, feel a sort of horror at such things.

Hausdorfer. Horror? That is the right word.

Heinrich. But tell me, Mr. Hausdorfer, aren't they to be envied—the people who can escape like that—escape from their sorrows into their work, into their art? —who may even possess the magic power to shape their grief into something beautiful, instead of pouring it out in useless tears?

Hausdorfer. Into something beautiful? Does that bring back the dead?

Heinrich. As little as do the tears. I don't say that our joy in our work can out-weigh the grief for a beloved one lost. But isn't it all that is left to us? This work of ours? Will you not tend your garden as carefully as before? And I—I long for the day when I shall be able to work again, to accomplish something worth while. We must all bow to the inevitable.

Hausdorfer. To the *inevitable*—yes, that may be true.

Heinrich. This was inevitable.

Hausdorfer. No—no——

Heinrich (*slightly surprised*). But it was. Why torture yourself with such thoughts? Didn't you speak to the doctor yourself not more than six weeks ago—he told you the truth then—it had to come.

Hausdorfer. But not so soon—not yet.

Heinrich. How can you say that, Mr. Hausdorfer? You don't mean—that there was any neglect——

Hausdorfer. Oh, no—oh, no, forgive me. Everything was done that could possibly be done.

Heinrich. Well, then?

Hausdorfer. Didn't you tell me yourself, just now, that she might have had two or three years more to live?

Heinrich. Why, yes, that's true. But the doctor warned us that death might come suddenly any day—you know that as well as I do.

Hausdorfer. Suddenly? Yes, it came suddenly

enough. (*Hesitating, then with decision*) But whether it came—naturally—that's another question.

Heinrich (*startled*). What? Why?—— I don't understand how you could suggest such a thing—when there wasn't the slightest—the doctor would surely have noticed——

Hausdorfer. Why should he? An overdose of morphine—death before morning—the family are prepared——

Heinrich. You say that—with such strange conviction—did my mother ever—speak about——?

Hausdorfer. I am not mistaken—let that suffice.

Heinrich. Since you have already said so much, Mr. Hausdorfer, you will understand that I——

Hausdorfer. I know what I am talking about—don't ask any more.

Heinrich. You mean—the letter on her desk——

Hausdorfer (*nods*). Yes. (*There is a pause*)

Heinrich (*alarmed, doubtful*). The letter? Hm—— Yet why should I be surprised? How many times in those terrible nights have I asked myself—I will confess it now, even at the risk of giving you the horrors—I have asked myself why we poor mortals should suffer so much misery—such agony, when it is in our power to end it all any moment.

Hausdorfer. Heinrich!

Heinrich. If my mother has done—what you say she has—then she has done right.

Hausdorfer. Heinrich!

Heinrich. That is my honest opinion.

Hausdorfer. But you don't know, Heinrich—you don't know the truth. She would have lived on—even in torture—as long as God gave her life—she would have lived on for my sake and for her own—for our few hours in the garden here—so full of memories of our youth, and our happiness. She died for your sake, Heinrich—now you know,—she died for you.

Heinrich (*in growing excitement*). For me——? For me? I don't understand you at all—for me? What do you mean?

Hausdorfer. Can't you really understand? Can't you imagine? Didn't you speak of it yourself, just now?

Heinrich. Speak of what?

Hausdorfer. Haven't you just told me what has been going on in you this last year? And do you think your mother wouldn't notice it?

Heinrich. Notice what?

Hausdorfer. That her illness hampered you in your work?—that you couldn't write—that you were afraid your talent was dead—that you—*you*—were the martyr, that you were a ruined man—she saw all that—and *because* she saw it——

Heinrich. Becuse of that? Oh, no, no—it isn't possible.

Hausdorfer. She was your mother—it was quite possible.

Heinrich. Oh, no, no. Mr. Hausdorfer, your grief leads you into surmises that are quite unjustified. Of course I realize that my state of mind cannot have been a secret to my mother—although I did my best to hide it from her. But that this should have been the reason for—oh, no—no.

Hausdorfer (*interrupting vehemently*). Why won't you believe me? Do you think I am lying to you? Why should I? (*He takes a letter from his pocket*) Here, read this—read this—this letter was written with full consciousness—it's the letter that was found on her desk. She wrote it that last evening—and half an hour later—read it—read it—it's all there—because she saw you suffer—*she* saw *you*—suffer—she—left us—before her time had come—that's why—she died.

Heinrich (*reads the letter quickly*). Mother! mother! (*He sinks down as if crushed*) For me—for my sake—why then—then I am her—oh, my God—Mother! (*He kneels before the armchair burying his head in its seat.* HAUSDORFER *looks down at him and nods slowly. There is a long pause. Finally* HEINRICH *rises and speaks quietly*)

Heinrich. I will go now. I can imagine how painful it is for you to see me here. This letter—(*He still holds

it in his hand)—it is written in full consciousness and it tells the truth. I cannot doubt it. (*After a moment's hesitation*) But may I—may I call your attention to one sentence?

Hausdorfer. Which?

Heinrich. This one, in which my mother implores you never to betray the contents of this letter to me. (*Reading*) "I implore you——" She implores you to leave me in the belief that she died a natural death. This letter was intended for you alone and certainly not for me.

Hausdorfer. But I intend that you shall know of it. I take the responsibility. You will survive it.

Heinrich. Your action has destroyed the very reason for her voluntary death, for her great sacrifice. *She* did not will that I should feel myself her murderer, that I should go through life as one accursed. And some day you may come to realize that you have done a great wrong, not only to me but to her—a wrong as great as mine has been.

Hausdorfer. I will take it upon myself, Heinrich—I can tell you,—*you.* You will not feel guilty long—you will live on—you will work—you will shape it into something beautiful.

Heinrich. That is my right—it is even my duty now. There is nothing for me now but to kill myself, or to give the proof that my mother—has not died in vain.

Hausdorfer. Heinrich! Your mother was alive less than a month ago and you can talk like this? She killed herself for your sake—and you can shake it off? A few days more and you'll be thinking, perhaps, that what she did was only her duty. Am I not right? You are all alike, you artists—great and small—all alike—proud, arrogant! What is all your writing—even if you were the greatest genius—what is all your writing compared to one such living hour?—one of those hours when your mother sat here in this armchair and talked to us—or just sat silent—but she was here—and she was alive—she was alive—alive!

Heinrich. Living hours? They live no longer than the life of him who remembers them. And it is no mean vo-

cation to give such hours an enduring existence beyond the grave. Good-bye, Mr. Hausdorfer. Today your grief gives you the right to misunderstand me. In the Spring, when your garden blooms anew, we will meet again. For you, too,—will go on living. (*He goes out through the veranda. As he opens the door of the house a broad stream of light from the lamp shines out into the now darkened garden*)

CURTAIN

THE LADY WITH THE DAGGER

A DRAMA

CHARACTERS

REMIGIO

PAULINE (Paola)

LEONHARD (Lionardo)

THE LADY WITH THE DAGGER

A small room in a picture gallery, hung with works of the Italian Renaissance. On the center wall, in a conspicuous position, is a large picture of a beautiful woman in a flowing gown, somewhat in the style of Palma Vecchio. She holds a dagger in her upraised right hand and stares at the ground at her feet, as if someone lay there whom she had murdered. The only furniture on the stage is a bench in the center of the room. Silence broods over the scene. An attendant passes slowly across the stage. When he has gone, PAULINE *comes in from the Left, holding a catalogue. She saunters through the room, stops to look at a picture on the Right wall. She wears a handsome street dress with rich furs. A few seconds later,* LEONHARD *comes in from the opposite side. He is a good-looking young man, wearing a long overcoat of the latest cut. He stops behind* PAULINE.

Leonhard. Good morning——

Pauline (*turns to him, smiling*). Good morning. I have just arrived. Room 9, that would be right, wouldn't it?

Leonhard. How do you mean?

Pauline. It was room 8 in which we parted last time.

Leonhard. Quite right. I didn't know you were so particular about the pictures. I scarcely dared hope you would come today.

Pauline. You had my promise.

Leonhard. Last night's affair was a late one?

Pauline. Until morning almost. Too bad you had to leave so early. It was a delightful affair.

Leonhard. They certainly lionized him.

Pauline. Did that distress you?

Leonhard. The whole world may kneel at his feet for all I care. But you, Pauline, you loved him more than ever last night—you were proud of him.

Pauline. Had I not cause? Do you not admire him yourself? You were shaken to your inmost soul—you applauded as madly as any of them when the curtain fell on the last act.

Leonhard. You noticed that?

Pauline. I looked down at you often enough. (*He kisses her hand, she draws it gently away*) Didn't you want to show me a picture which you think so like me?

Leonhard. Quite right. Here it is—this large one.

Pauline (*walks over to the picture of the Lady with the Dagger*). This one? Yes—it has something of me.

Leonhard. The resemblance is remarkable—apart from the dagger naturally.

Pauline (*smiling*). Why "naturally?" You never can tell. (*Looking in her catalogue*) Number 726—Lady with Dagger—unknown artist, died about 1530——

Leonhard. Those are your eyes.

Pauline. Are?—they might be. Let us stay here a while. I feel at home in this room.

Leonhard. Pauline——

Pauline. Not altogether on your account. In there, where the old Dutch and German masters hang, I was not so happy. But I have a sort of feeling of being at home here. I really believe I must have seen all these people somewhere. Look at that old gentleman. (*She points to a picture on the right wall*) He certainly looks as if he knew me. It would not surprise me in the least if he were to bow to me.

Leonhard. He may have been a guest at your house in the early days of the 16th century.

Pauline. Why not? My mother's people came from Florence. They wore prettier clothes then than now, don't you think? But this is not intended for a slur on your new overcoat, which is really vastly becoming. (LEONHARD *bows*) Still—I will not deny——

Leonhard. Deny what?

Pauline (*smiling*). That if I had met you in a costume like any of these——

Leonhard. It is my misfortune that I did not have the honor of knowing you in those days.

Pauline. Are you sure you did not? We may have forgotten it, perhaps.

Leonhard. I assure you I could not have forgotten—you——

Pauline (*pondering*). Perhaps—if we exert our will power—— (*There is a pause, as her eyes wander from one picture to another*)

Leonhard. Your husband's name is on every tongue today.

Pauline (*coming back to the present*). Yes, I can imagine it.

Leonhard (*with meaning*). And yours also.

Pauline. Naturally. (*She turns as if to go*)

Leonhard. Pauline!——

Pauline (*she turns to him somewhat absently*). Well, what is it?

Leonhard. Pauline—how can you endure it? (*She looks at him with a peculiar smile*) Everyone in the theatre knew the history of that play. It was simply the story——

Pauline (*interrupts quickly*). Of Princess Marie.

Leonhard. That was what they called it.

Pauline. And who gives you the right to imagine that it was anything else?

Leonhard. I imagine only what the whole town knows—but I know more.

Pauline. And that is?——

Leonhard. I know that there was a moment last evening when you hated him.

Pauline. Hated whom?

Leonhard. The man for whom you and your fate mean nothing more than an opportunity to show his wit—his genius if you will.

Pauline. My whole life may have no other meaning——

Leonhard (*simply, without pathos*). And is that part of your life's meaning that its secrets should be bared to the mob? Princess Marie? Everyone knew that it was Princess Marie up there in the box. Master Gottfried? Everyone knew that it was he who had written the play. And all the words and all the kisses on the stage—his treachery and her despair—his remorse and her forgiveness—all the passion and all the misery—it was all true—and Master Gottfried had made it into a play, and Princess Marie sat in her box and looked on as it was played. Oh, Pauline, I felt yesterday as if I must go to you—and free you—as if I must carry you away with me—you seemed so like a slave—a helpless, humiliated slave. I pitied you—and I was ashamed.

Pauline. Ashamed? Why?

Leonhard. Because I love you, Pauline. (*She looks at him calmly*) Do not be angry with me, Pauline. I know I have no right to speak thus to you—no right except that nothing else in all the world matters to me—nothing but you—and that I'm ready to die for you—and that I am young.

Pauline. That means more than a little. But let us drop the subject and move on. Come, let us see what is in the next room. No—no more of that, I beg you.

Leonhard (*imploringly*). Then tell me, Pauline, why are you here today? Why did you come yesterday and last week? And why, as we sat here quietly together and your knee touched mine, why did you tremble? Why do your eyes grow moist when I speak to you, and your lips pout with longing, even while we stand here so calmly?

Pauline. Why question me so vehemently, Leonhard? I deny nothing—denials are vulgar and cowardly. But it would be the worst of all lies if I were to tell you that I love you. There has never been a moment when I believed it myself. But there was a moment when I was ready to become your mistress. You let that moment pass and it will not return—you will never guess when it was even. Yes—that is life. It is no disgrace for me and no particular honor for you. It has happened many million times before. But most women in my position

would say, "I will give you the love of a sister, a friend—ask for no other." I, Leonhard, I say to you that I have for you about every feeling you could wish me to have except friendship—no, I do not feel that. (*She stops suddenly*) Haven't I said that to you—once before?

Leonhard (*passionately*). No—you have never spoken to me like this.

Pauline (*dreamily*). Strange—I seemed to think so.

Leonhard. Why did you stop so suddenly?

Pauline (*dazed*). What is the matter with me? Where am I? I stopped—— (*As if slowly awakening*) Well—I stopped because I had nothing more to say. Good-bye.

Leonhard (*hurt*). What does that mean?

Pauline. It means that we have met for the last time.

Leonhard. The last?

Pauline. Yes. I leave for Italy tomorrow morning with my husband.

Leonhard. And when do you return?

Pauline. I do not know—never for you.

Leonhard. Pauline—you are joking—we never imagined that.

Pauline. How could we? I did not know it myself until this morning.

Leonhard. Then what has happened? Tell me—why——?

Pauline. Why? Simply because I do not care to imperil my peace of mind, my life's happiness, my life itself, perhaps, for—what is it they call it?—"one short hour of bliss——"

Leonhard. And your husband? What does he think of this sudden decision?

Pauline. My husband? I asked him to take me away.

Leonhard. What excuse did you give?

Pauline. None. I told him the truth as I always do.

Leonhard. Always?

Pauline. I promised him—on the very first day—

that I would confess every emotion of my heart to him—he promised the same.

Leonhard. And this morning?

Pauline. I told him that I am in danger.

Leonhard. And what did he say?

Pauline. I told you. We leave tomorrow morning.

Leonhard. Pauline! Do you think he will ever forgive you?

Pauline. Why not? I have forgiven him more.

Leonhard. He is a man and we men are all vain. He is a poet and therefore a thousand times vainer than other men. He will make you repent it all the rest of your life.

Pauline. I must endure it.

Leonhard. He will torture you as cruelly as if you had really sinned.

Pauline. Had I sinned he would kill me.

Leonhard. Nonsense. He would make a new play of it and be grateful to you at the last.

Pauline. Possibly. He is the man to combine the two.

Leonhard. When do you start?

Pauline. Tomorrow morning, as I told you.

Leonhard. Tomorrow? Then today is still ours.

Pauline. Are you mad?

Leonhard. I shall expect you this evening, Pauline.

Pauline. You are quite mad.

Leonhard. I was never so sane as in this moment.

Pauline. But, Leonhard—now that he knows so much——

Leonhard. I would die a thousand deaths for you, Pauline. (*He takes her hand*)

Pauline. No. No. Good-bye—this is utter nonsense—I do not love you—— Good-bye——

Leonhard. Pauline! (*A loud, deep bell, like a church bell, begins slowly to toll the noon hour*)

Pauline. Let me go. I must get home—listen—it is twelve o'clock. He knows that I am here to say good-bye to you—if I should dare to go out this evening——

Leonhard. Well?

Pauline. It would go hard with both of us.

Leonhard. I will wait for you, Pauline—— (*They stand before the picture of The Lady with the Dagger. The bell tolls slowly*)

Pauline (*looking more closely at the picture*). Who lies here in the shadow?

Leonhard. Where?

Pauline. Can't you see?

Leonhard. I can't see anything.

Pauline. It is you!

Leonhard. I? What a queer idea!

Pauline. And all these others——? (*She looks around the room, then back at the picture*) Who painted it?

Leonhard. We just read it—unknown artist. About 1530.

Pauline. *Unknown——?*

Leonhard. Pauline, what is the matter?

Pauline. It is I, myself—do you not recognize me?

Leonhard. Why, yes. I said the resemblance was remarkable.

Pauline. It is I—my very self. Do you not recognize me? And here—in the black shadow—the dead youth—it is you.

Leonhard. Pauline—what is the matter?

Pauline. Do you not remember, Leonhard? (*She takes his hand. They sit down slowly on the divan with their faces turned toward the picture*)

Leonhard. Remember?

Pauline. Lionardo, dost thou remember?—— (*The stage is plunged in sudden darkness. The bell is heard tolling slowly until it grows light again. Then it stops suddenly. During the moment of darkness the scene has changed to* REMIGIO's *studio, in the gray of early morning. It is a large, high-ceilinged room with a huge Gothic window at the back. To the left is a small door; to the right, a heavy dark red portière covers the entrance to an inner room. There are pictures on the wall appropriate for the epoch, copies of antique statues about the room, an easel near the front, to the right, bears a*

large picture which is veiled. Furnishing and decoration of the 16th century. LIONARDO *(Leonhard) lies on the floor near the portière, but he is not asleep. There is silence in the room for a moment, until* PAOLA *(Pauline) comes in from behind the portière. She wears a loose white robe, her hair hanging free. She is now exactly like the picture of the first scene. She passes* LIONARDO *without seeing him, goes slowly to the easel and raises the veil gently from the picture. It is the picture of the first scene, but still incomplete, for the raised arm holding the dagger is missing. The picture cannot be seen distinctly until the stage grows lighter.* PAOLA *stands looking at it long and silently.* LIONARDO *rolls over to where she is standing and kisses the hem of her garment)*

Paola (starts slightly). Are you still here? Have you not left the house?

Lionardo. No, love, I lingered here before your door

Paola. Then hurry now.

Lionardo.

While still the fragrance of your kisses clings
About my hair? I grudge the balmy wind
Of jealous night the power to bear it off.

Paola.

'Twas little wise: some servant might awake
And mark your going. See, the dawn is gray.

Lionardo (he rises).

Then Paola, I'll wait day's coming here,
And catch the light's first glow upon my work.

Paola.

Ah, spare your toil! Why do you strive in vain?
Yes, if you were young Bassano's pupil,
Franco's or Andrea Galbi's even—
I then, perhaps, could understand your zeal.
But here where genius blazes on the walls
How do you dare to ply the futile brush?
How comes it that you do not each new morn
Destroy the labor of the day before,
And sink in humbleness upon the ground,
Where treads the Mighty and Unequalled One?

Lionardo.
I know I am a dauber, Paola
Not worthy with the master here to work.
And many a morning stole so sluggishly
Out of night's clouds, when I would fain
Have ended all my useless life at once.
But this day, this! It is another dawn.
And not for all the master's genius, fame,
Would I exchange the mem'ry of this night,
When you, his wife, I held within my arms.
And ask Remigio if, were he to choose,
Which he would choose.

Paola (*gravely*).
None has the choice: not he, nor I, nor you.
It comes to us——

Lionardo. And comes to each of us as he deserves.

Paola (*absently*). Think you?

Lionardo.
For he sees naught in you of what you are,
While I see more than you can see yourself.
Fulfillment of all beauty—of my dream—
Glows through your body, and from out your eyes
Gleams back the meaning of life's hidden deeps.
For him your whole existence is naught else
Than his art's spur: for when his trait'rous kiss
Calls up the glow of love upon your face
'Tis but to paint a picture in its guise.
And trust me, when this last completed is,
That still imperfect waits your lord's return,
Then dies his love for you—

Paola.
I know it! I myself am nothing more:
Am all exhausted: and the thing I was
Now pulses in this picture—

(*She stands before the picture*)

It is a riddle here for me to solve
I look at mine own face and know it, yet
I know it not. I ne'er looked so and yet
I might look so. Some fate that is before me
Might cast a shadow on me like to this

Better or worse than all the past can show—
Than all I ever thought or felt or was—
Some possibility with half-closed lids
Lies here for life athirst. Would he but come!
Whence this fierce longing? Is it from my heart?
Or from that woman's on the easel there?
Thou art long away—too long, Remigio—
A year is endless.

Lionardo.
You dream, my Paola! Hardly one month
Has he been gone.

Paola (with passion).
Longing counts not the hours. But he will come
Today! Ah, yes! Today at last he'll come.

Lionardo.
Again you err. For if, as first was planned,
He yesterday from Florence took to horse
He cannot come until tomorrow noon.

Paola. No, he comes today.

Lionardo. Impossible! (*With a touch of scorn*)
For not on longing's wings
The Master comes, but on an earthly steed
And subject unto earth's compelling laws
Of sleep and food as other mortals are,
Thus must he come.

Paola.
Not till tomorrow? Why may I not crush
The empty hours like nuts within my palm!
One whole long day! A day that just now dawns!
Ah, I would give and gladly, what of life
Remains to me, could he come now, at once.

Lionardo. Paola!

Paola (indifferently). Yes?

Lionardo (with passion). Paola, look at me! *(He takes her hand and holds it)*

Paola (she leaves her hand in his, but does not turn to him).
And why? I know thee well enough: thou art
Young Lionardo—yes—I know.
Art pigment-mixer? No? Thou art not? What then?

A page at Court? Or e'en a prince, perhaps?
Forgive! Not pigment-mixer, prince nor page,
Thou art a painter, Lionardo called,
And thou art fair, I know. Why asketh thou
That I should look at thee? With fast-closed eyes
I'll tell thee more, I'll tell thee all thou wilt.
Thy hair is brown and soft and lightly curled:
Thine eyes are blue and dark the brows above,
Thy throat is slim and white as any maid's,
Thy limbs are willow-slender, strong thine arm.
Well, is't not enough? Must I still see thee?
Drop thou my hand! (*She draws away her hand*)

Lionardo. Paola, wilt play with me?

Paola (*she has no eyes for him*).
From Florence will he bring new orders home?
If so, then next time I will go with him.
Think, Lionardo, not since girlhood passed
Have I in Florence been, seen Cosmo's glory—
Nor met my brothers since. But 'tis not that
That plagues me so. The ladies of the court
Of Medici o'er-full of passion are
And over-gallant: when an artist comes
Like him with name and fame from distant parts,
They'll wait all night, 'tis said, before his door
Until their turn shall come.

Lionardo. What is't to you with whom Remigio sleeps?

Paola (*with a quick glance*).
True, Lionardo! To live the waking hours together,
That alone has meaning! Yet, 'tis true
Experience teaches that some nightly revel
Though insignificant it seems, will oft
Obtrude itself into the day's bright light
And plume and pride itself, as it had life.

Lionardo. Paola, yesternight thou were 't——

Paola. Thine, thou wilt say?
Dare but to speak it now the dawn is come!
Did'st hear me murmur as the others do
"I've waited for thee—thee alone I love?"
There came no other sound from out these lips
But only stifled cries of wanton lust.

It is no more and therefore never was.

Lionardo.

No, Paola, it was and therefore is,
And always will be as my right to thee.

Paola.

Thy right? Thy right to me? Dost thou not see
That all its semblance faded with the stars?
And that thou hast no more of right to me
For all thy youth and beauty, courage, strength,
Than if thou were't hideous, lame, or old and senile.

Lionardo.

Paola! tell me that these cruel words
Are but to prove me! Enough, have pity!

Paola. Be still. The morning came.

Lionardo. The night will come again.

Paola. Never for us! Away! Keep to thy place!

Lionardo (*on his knees before her*). This is my place —or else it is the grave.

Paola. Be careful not to touch me.

Lionardo.

How hard and cold and threatening those eyes,
That promised and fulfilled so much of love
For me this night.

Paola.

Enough, enough. Stand up, I tell thee now,
Or I will treat thee as I saw Remigio
Treat that bold girl, red Perugrina,
Who came as you do loudly clamoring
And kneeling in the dust and crying out
"I love thee so," and "Ah, I love thee so,"
And "Thou hast kissed me, dost remember it?"
And " 'Twas this night," and "Ah, and woe is me!"

Lionardo. What did Remigio?

Paola. He chased the shameless huzzy from his door.
(*There is a long pause*)

Lionardo (*rises slowly, speaks in quite another tone*).

No, I am not like Perugrina, no!
For were this woman I, or like to me,
Then she had done what I shall surely do.
Farewell.

Paola. Would'st kill thyself? Well, I am worth it!
Lionardo.
Thou art, my Paola, and therefore I must do it—
With thine own dagger here before thy door.
Then all will think, as will Remigio,
That unrequitted love has goaded me.
Yes, I will do it: and for mine own sake,
For shame burns deep—and yet beyond all this
I die for you as well—for your own sake.
Paola. For me?
Lionardo.
To free you from the grip of fear,
Lest any word or look of mine
Betray you or reveal your guilt.
Paola. What say'st thou? Fear? What think'st thou that I fear?
Lionardo.
What many a wife ere now has dreaded
From him whom she deceived. Breathe free again,
The steel shall reach the heart of all thy care.
Paola.
Stay, Lionardo! Dar'st thou to say,
My cowardice does drive thee to thy death?
Lionardo.
Thou art no coward, Paola, but thou would'st live—
That is the courage of the guilty heart.
Paola.
Courage is to confess the guilt.
Stay here!
Lionardo. Paola—— (*Hoof-beats in the court below. They both stop and listen*)
Paola. Hark! Dost hear it?
Lionardo. 'Tis he.
Paola. Then his longing was
Stronger than earthly law. He's come, he's come. (*She hastens to the window*) He is dismounting. Come —for I am ready.
Lionardo. What would you do?
Paola. I said it.

Lionardo.
No, Paola, no. I do beseech you.
Not this wild thought! believe me that you trust
Too strongly in his greatness.

Paola. His smiling eye seeks mine. (*She waves her scarf from the window*)
Welcome, Remigio.
Alas, I fear thou'lt smile no more today.

Lionardo.
If conscience drive you to confessing all
Then put the blame on me alone: tell him
I hid a potion in your wine: nay, more—
Threatened your life unless you yielded to me—
But spare him knowledge of your fault. His pride
Is dearer to him than his wife. And that
He threw in laughing words—in idle jest—
Across the table at the Prince's feast—
I heard it well, I sat across from you
And as he mocking spoke your eyes sought mine.

Paola. You still remember?

Lionardo.
He'll keep it, I assure you, Paola—
His laughing vow to bury his white teeth
As would a hungry beast, in your soft throat.
I beg you, Paola—I beseech you—
His step is on the stair—if once the words
Escape your lips then there is only death.
Forget my hasty speech, forgive me, love—
Ne'er shall my hated self your eyes offend.
I leave this city e'er the evening falls.
I was a shadow only on the wall
And as a shadow will I fade away.
Mine you are not, and neither are you his:
Life only has the perfect right to you,
Do not refuse it! It were sin to light
And springtime if you die. Live, Paola!
For you are much too fair—too glorious
To die. You leave behind you here too much
That's worth the living for. The door without
Turns gently on the hinge—I know you're brave

Be gracious and forgive me—then I swear
That in an hour's time I'll be no more!
His hand is on the latch—ah!—Paola!
(REMIGIO *comes in, smiling and happy.*)

Paola (*draws back from him*).
Take care that you embrace me not too soon—
This man here was my lover yesternight.
(*There is a long pause*)

Remigio. Go, Lionardo!

Lionardo.
Remigio, kill me!
I'll take no mercy at your hands.

Remigio.
It is not mercy bids thee go from here
Nor is it anger that would bar the way.
There is no thought within my heart of thee:
I do not need thee, so I bid thee go!

Lionardo. Remigio, I beseech you, kill me!

Remigio.
He kills who hates, and he who loves can kill.
Indifference has no weapon. Should I break
The humble glass that the forbidden draught
Was quaffed from by a reckless, wayward child?
Because thou hast the gift of conscious life
Makes thee no more to me than what thou art,
The miserable instrument of chance.

Lionardo. I begged for death, but I demand it now!

Remigio. Thy wish moves me as little as thy prayer.

Lionardo. I'll force you to do it.

Remigio. No man has forced me yet.

Lionardo.
I'll stand out in the market-place and cry
That Paola, your wife, was mine this night.

Remigio. They'll know an hour earlier, that's all.

Lionardo.
I'll call you rogue before the court! I'll scorn you
As coward playing the magnanimous.
I'll swear your wife pursued me till I fell.

Remigio. 'Twill help thee little thus to slur the dead.

Lionardo.
Once more, Remigio, I pray you, strike!
Ere you have let the one right moment pass.
For new desire of life within me moves,
I have more work to do before I die.
I hate you more than e'er before a man
Did hate another: always hated you,
But knew it only now since the hot shower
Of poisoned scorn you pour upon my head.
I hate you so that I must live to kill you,
And yet the more that not a thousand deaths
From my poor hand could really take your life.
For in your work you'll live for all the world:
In your wife's longing you will live for her:
For me, stronger than death, in my wild hate.
And yet I'll kill you, for the uselessness
Whips up my lagging will with scorpion thrusts.
Let me not go, Remigio, for as sure
As if a thousand swords were bared for you,
You're lost, when I through yonder door shall pass.

Remigio (*goes to the door and opens it*). The door is open, you may go your way. (*He turns back again,* LIONARDO *goes to the door*)

Paola. Let him not go! He'll surely hold his vow——

Lionardo (*turning at door*). While I have life!

Paola. While you have life! (*She runs to him and buries her dagger in his throat.* LIONARDO *sinks dying at her feet.* PAOLA *stands over him with a dagger in her upraised hand, now exactly like the picture in the first scene. She remains thus motionless, until the end of this scene*)

Remigio. Paola! (*He stares at her long and intently. Slowly a change comes over his face. He grows calmer, almost bright*)
Was that the answer? Is my prayer fulfilled?
That light might come for this great work of mine?
This *is* the answer! I will finish it—
Ah, gracious Heaven, that brought this thing to me,
Grant me one hour of calm within my soul,
And power for my hand to work my will.

(He goes to the door and locks it, then comes down to his easel. PAOLA *remains in her position until a sudden darkness falls upon the stage and the bell begins to toll as before. In a few moments the little gallery room is revealed, and the bell stops when the stage is light again. Altogether it has struck just twelve times.* PAULINE *and* LEONHARD *are seated on the divan with their faces turned toward the picture on the center wall)*

Pauline. Dost thou remember——

Leonhard. Pauline! Where are you? Are you dreaming?

Pauline (as if in a dream). It comes again? All that we once have lived? Lionardo—must it be?

Leonhard. Pauline—what is it?

Pauline (as if awakening). Leonhard! *(She looks around)*

Leonhard. You seemed to have lost yourself for a moment.

Pauline. Only a moment?

Leonhard. Were you dreaming?

Pauline. Was I? *(She looks at him long and intently)* If you do not *know* then you can never understand. Good-bye. *(She rises and turns away from him)*

Leonhard. Pauline! Is this really—good-bye?

Pauline. Forever.

Leonhard. And this evening?

Pauline. This evening? This evening—— *(Into her eyes there comes an expression as if some fate were hanging over her from which she cannot escape. She takes his hand, looks him gravely in the eyes and speaks, in a tone that expresses decision rather than love)* I will come—— *(She turns and goes out quickly)*

CURTAIN

LAST MASKS

A DRAMA

CHARACTERS

KARL RADEMACHER, journalist

FLORIAN JACKWERTH, actor

ALEXANDER WEIHGAST

DR. HALMSCHLAEGER }
DR. TANN } Assistant Doctors in the Vienna Public Hospital

JULIANA PASCHANDA, hospital nurse

LAST MASKS

In the Public Hospital, Vienna. Small room, separated by linen curtains from a public ward. To the left is a small white bed, beside it a large armchair. There is a large table in the center of the room on which are bottles, papers, records, etc. Two plain chairs stand to right and left of the table, a candle is burning on the table. There is no other furniture. The only entrance is through the curtains at back.

KARL RADEMACHER, *past fifty, terribly emaciated and ery gray, is in the armchair by the bed, leaning back with eyes closed.*

JULIANA PASCHANDA, *the nurse, is at the table writing. She is stout, good-natured, of indefinite age.*

FLORIAN JACKWERTH *raises the flap of the curtain and comes in.* FLORIAN *is twenty-eight, thin, smooth-shaven, with eyes shining in fever. He wears a loose linen gown, which he drapes about himself in impressive folds. When he raises the curtain the main room beyond can be seen, dimly lighted by a hanging lamp.*

Florian. Always busy, Miss Paschanda?

Nurse. Are you up again? What will the doctor say? Go back to your bed and go to sleep.

Florian. Surely. I shall even take a long, long sleep. May I not help you, fair lady? That is—of course, I don't mean in the matter of sleeping! (*The* NURSE *pays no attention to him. He creeps on tiptoe to* RADEMACHER'S *chair, whispers*) Miss Paschanda—look here—please look here——

Nurse. What is it?

Florian (*coming back to her*). On my soul—I thought the man was dead.

Nurse. He'll last for a while yet.

Florian. Think so? Well, good-night then, Miss Juliana Paschanda.

Nurse. I'm not Miss, I'm married.

Florian. Oh, I beg your pardon. Haven't had the honor of meeting your husband yet.

Nurse. I hope for your sake you won't. He's an attendant in the Morgue.

Florian. No, thanks—no use for that just at present. (*Confidentially*) Say, Mrs. Paschanda, did you see the young lady who honored me with a visit this afternoon?

Nurse. The young lady with the red hat?

Florian (*offended*). Red hat—red hat—yes, she's a fellow player. We were engaged together last season in Olmütz—she was leading lady—yours truly, leading juvenile. Take one look at me—I need say no more. Yes—I wrote her a postal card, just an ordinary postal card, and she came at once. There *is* such a thing as fidelity, even on the stage! And she promised to look around, to speak to the agents about a summer engagement for me, when I'm let out of this place. So you see the young lady has a good heart, even if she does wear a red hat, Mrs. Paschanda. (*He coughs*) She might come again. I'll write her to wear a blue hat next time, since you don't like red, Mrs. Paschanda. (*He goes off into a bad fit of coughing*)

Nurse. Hush—the patients are asleep. (*Listens as if she heard something outside*)

Florian. What is it?

Nurse. I thought I heard the doctor. (*The hospital clock strikes the hour*)

Florian. What time is it?

Nurse. Nine o'clock.

Florian. Who makes the rounds tonight?

Nurse. Dr. Halmschlaeger.

Florian. Oh, Dr. Halmschlaeger. Nice man, but just a little conceited. (*He sees that* RADEMACHER *is awake*)

Your servant, Mr. Rademacher. (*The latter nods.* FLORIAN *continues, imitating* DR. HALMSCHLAEGER) Well, my dear Rademacher, how are we today? (*Pretends to take off his overcoat and hand it to the* NURSE) Mrs. Paschanda, will you be so kind? Thank you.

Nurse (*laughing in spite of herself*). How you can imitate people.

Florian (*in quite another tone now, turns as if going from one bed to another*). Nothing new today? Nothing new? Nothing new? Good—very good. Good—good.

Nurse. Why—why, that's the head doctor! If he could see you now——!

Florian. Oh, that's nothing, now watch. (*He lets himself fall into a chair, his face distorted as if in mortal pain, his eyes rolling up*)

Nurse. For mercy's sake, that's——

Florian (*interrupting his trick for a moment*). Well? Guess——?

Nurse. The man in bed 17—the roofer, who died yesterday. Oh, do stop it—it's a sin.

Florian. My dear Mrs. Paschanda, do you think I'm wasting my time in this hospital? There's a great deal to be learned here.

Nurse. Here's the doctor. (*She goes out through the curtain.* HALMSCHLAEGER *and* TANN *can be seen further down the large room*)

Florian. Yes, Mr. Rademacher, I'm making interesting studies here.

Rademacher. Are you?

Florian. It pays an actor to be in a hospital for a while. You think I can't use what I see here because I'm a comedian? Wrong. All wrong. It's a discovery of my own, Mr. Rademacher. (*Important*) True dramatic intuition can reconstruct the comic mask from the saddest face, even from the face distorted in pain. When I see a man die I know just how he looked when he laughed at a good joke—but what's the matter, Mr. Rademacher? Oh, come now, man—courage—courage! —don't lose your sense of humor, whatever you do. Look

at me now. Not a week ago I was done for—not only in the doctor's opinion, that wouldn't have mattered much,—but in my own mind. And now, I'm as cheery as can be—and in a week more—ta ta! Farewell, ye quiet halls! And herewith I take the liberty of inviting you to my first appearance. (*He has a bad fit of coughing*)

Rademacher. That'll hardly be possible.

Florian. Say, isn't it queer? If you and I had stayed well, we'd have been deadly enemies.

Rademacher. Why?

Florian. Why—I'd have acted and you'd have written mean things about me—and I never like critics who say mean things about me. But this way we're the best of friends. Say, listen, tell me, Mr. Rademacher, did I look as bad as you do, a week ago?

Rademacher. There's a difference——

Florian. Nonsense. You have to exert your will-power, that's all. Do you know how I made myself well again? (RADEMACHER *looks at him*) You needn't look at me like that—I'm nearly well anyway. I simply wouldn't allow any sad thoughts to come up in my mind.

Rademacher. How did you prevent it?

Florian. I thought of all the people who'd ever made me angry and I said the nastiest things I knew to them—in my thoughts. That's a great comfort, let me tell you. I even figured out whom I wanted to haunt when I was dead. There's a fellow critic of yours in Olmütz—a malicious beast—and then the manager who docked half my salary because I extemporized—and the audience laughing at *me* all the time and not at the fool play—he ought to have been grateful to me, instead of which—well, just wait! I have a talent for appearing, as a ghost or anything else,—I could make a decent income even in heaven. I'd take a job with the Spiritualists. (*The* NURSE *returns with* DR. HALMSCHLAEGER *and* DR. TANN)

Tann (*young, carelessly dressed, his hat on the back of his head, an unlighted cigar in his mouth*) Come now, Halmschlaeger, don't stay here so long this time.

Halmschlaeger (*young, carefully dressed, wears*

glasses and a small blond beard). No, I'll be through in a few minutes.

Tann. If you're not, I'll go on ahead and wait for you at the café.

Halmschlaeger. I'll be through here in a few moments.

Florian. Good evening, doctor.

Halmschlaeger. Why aren't you in bed? Mrs. Paschanda——

Florian. I've had all the sleep I need, doctor, I'm feeling fine now. May I invite you to my first performance?

Halmschlaeger (*amused at first, then turns away to hide his face*). Yes, yes. (*Goes to* RADEMACHER) Well, my dear Rademacher, how are we today? (FLORIAN *motions to the* NURSE *to see if she has appreciated his imitation of the doctor*)

Rademacher. Pretty bad, doctor.

Halmschlaeger (*reads the slate at the head of the bed while the* NURSE *holds the light*). 102.9—well, we had 103.2 yesterday. This is an improvement. Good-night then. (*He turns to go*)

Rademacher. Please, doctor——

Halmschlaeger. Do you want anything?

Rademacher. Please, doctor, how long will this last?

Halmschlaeger. You'll have to be patient for a little while yet.

Rademacher. That isn't what I mean, doctor. I mean when will it be—when will it be all over with me? (TANN *sits down at the table, idly turning over the papers there*)

Halmschlaeger. What a way to talk! (*To the* NURSE) Has he had his medicine?

Nurse. I gave it to him at half-past seven, sir.

Rademacher. Doctor—please don't treat me just like -like anybody—oh, I beg your pardon, sir!

Halmschlaeger (*slightly impatient, but still amiable*). Not so loud, please——

Rademacher. Just a word, doctor—I must know the truth—I *must*, for a particular reason.

Halmschlaeger. The truth? Why, I hope—of course we can't any of us see into the future, but I may say——

Rademacher. Doctor, suppose there was something I had to do, something very important—with the fate of others dependant on it—and my peace of mind—for my last hours——

Halmschlaeger (*still friendly*). Come, come—tell me more clearly what you want. But in as few words as possible, please. I have two more rooms to go through and if every patient took so much time—well, what is it?

Rademacher. There is someone I *must* speak to, doctor.

Halmschlaeger. You may write him if you want to. And you may see anyone you choose tomorrow afternoon from four to five. I have no objection.

Rademacher. That may be too late, doctor—I feel it will be too late—it may be all over by tomorrow morning—I must speak to him today.

Halmschlaeger. That's impossible. If you're so anxious about this matter why didn't you mention it yesterday?

Rademacher (*insistently*). You have been so good to me, doctor—I know it's an impertinence on my part—but you see, when you feel quite sure that tomorrow—or next day—the white-robed gentleman will come to carry you away—then you feel you can take liberties you wouldn't think of otherwise.

Tann. Well, Halmschlaeger, what's the trouble?

Halmschlaeger. Just a moment. (*To* RADEMACHER, *slightly impatient*). Well, then, what is it you want?

Rademacher. I *must* speak to a friend of mine, a Mr. Weihgast, Alexander Weihgast.

Halmschlaeger. Alexander Weihgast? Do you mean the celebrated writer?

Rademacher. Yes.

Halmschlaeger. He is a friend of yours?

Rademacher. He was—in earlier days.

Halmschlaeger. Then write to him.

Rademacher. What good will that do me? He

wouldn't find me here. I must speak to him today—at once—now.

Halmschlaeger (*firmly*). That is impossible, Mr. Rademacher, quite impossible. (*More gently*) But to make you feel better, I will write Mr. Weihgast, whom I happen to know personally, and ask him to come and see you tomorrow at any hour that suits him.

Rademacher. You know Weihgast, doctor? (*Suddenly*) Bring him here to me—bring him here.

Halmschlaeger. Oh, come now, Rademacher, this is just a little——

Rademacher (*in great excitement*). I know, doctor—I know it's asking a great deal—but you're so human, doctor—you understand things humanly. You're not like the others, who judge by rote and rule. And when you know, doctor—when you know that here's a dying man who has just one wish, one wish on which so much depends for him, and you know you can fulfill that wish—doctor, please, please go and fetch him, bring him here to me.

Halmschlaeger (*undecided, looks at his watch*). Why—but even if I should do it—how can I ask it of him?—at this hour? Really, you know it's an imposition—can't you see that yourself?

Rademacher. Oh, I know my friend Weihgast. If you tell him that his old friend Rademacher is dying in the public hospital and wants to see him—he'll not miss that. I beg of you, doctor—it means only a short drive for you. But for me—for me——

Halmschlaeger. Yes, that's just it. It's of no importance to me, of course. But for you—the excitement might do you great harm.

Rademacher. Oh, doctor, as one man to another—what does an hour more or less matter?

Halmschlaeger (*soothingly*). Come, come. (*After a moment's pause*) Well, I'll go to him. (RADEMACHER *attempts to thank him*) Of course, I can't guarantee that he'll come with me. But since you wish it so much—— (RADEMACHER *again attempts to speak*) Never mind, that's all right. (*Turns away from him*)

Tann. Well—at last!

Halmschlaeger. My dear Tann, would you mind taking a look through the other two rooms? There's very little to do—two injections—the nurse will tell you——

Tann. What's up?

Halmschlaeger (*aside to him*). It's a queer story. This poor devil here has been begging me to fetch an old friend of his, he has something very important to say to him, evidently. And who do you suppose this friend is? Weihgast, the well-known writer.

Tann. And you're going after him? See here, are you an errand boy? These people are forever abusing your good nature.

Halmschlaeger. That depends on how you look at it, my dear boy. To me, such happenings are the most interesting side of our profession.

Tann. Hm!—— That's one point of view.

Halmschlaeger. Then you'll take the other rooms?

Tann. Why, certainly. But there'll be no café for us this evening, I suppose.

Halmschlaeger. I may get there later. (*He goes out into the larger room with* TANN, *the* NURSE *following them. When they have gone,* FLORIAN *slips in*)

Florian. Well, what did you have to talk to the doctor about all this time?

Rademacher (*excited, almost cheerful*). I'm expecting a visitor—I'm expecting a visitor.

Florian (*interested*). A visitor? At this time of night?

Rademacher. Yes, my dear Jackwerth, and now, keep your eyes open. There'll be something for you to study—in my visitor's face. You take a look at the gentleman's face when he comes in and again when he goes out. (*More excited*) Oh, if I only live through it!—if I only live through it! Give me a glass of water, Jackwerth, please. (*He drinks the water greedily*) Thanks—thanks. Yes, the old machine *must* hold together that much longer. (*As if suddenly afraid*) Oh, if he'll only come—if he'll only come!

Florian. Who are you talking about?

Rademacher. Write to him? What good would that do me? I must have him here—opposite me—face to face—eye to eye—ah!——!

Florian (*alarmed*). Mr. Rademacher——

Rademacher. Don't be alarmed about me, there's no need for it. I feel so light at heart—on my soul—I believe I'm not even afraid to die now. I sha'n't mind it at all—after he has been here. Florian Jackwerth, what can I do for you?

Florian (*astonished*). What?

Rademacher. I want to show my gratitude. It was you gave me this idea—yes, you. You shall be my heir. The key of my desk is under my pillow. You don't expect much, eh? Who knows? You may be mistaken—there may be masterpieces hidden there. Why, I feel better and better. Perhaps I may even get well again.

Florian. Of course you will.

Rademacher. If I do get well—if ever I set foot outside of this hospital alive, I swear I'll begin all over again.

Florian. Begin what?

Rademacher. I'll begin the fight again—I won't give up yet—I'm not so old—only fifty-four. That's no age at all, when a man's well and strong. And I am Somebody, Florian Jackwerth, I am Somebody—you can believe it. But I've had hard luck. I'm as good as many another who rides the high horse, my dear sir. I can measure myself with many another who thinks he's greater than I, because he's been more fortunate. (*Feverishly*) If he only comes—if he only comes—oh, Lord God, I pray You—even if You have let me shift for myself these fifty-four years—I pray You now—give me strength for this last half hour, strength to even up as well as I can. Let me see him sitting there before me—pale, crushed—as small before me now as he has felt himself superior all his life. Yes, my dear Jackwerth, the man I am waiting for is a friend of my youth. Twenty-five years ago—even twenty years ago—we were fond of each other, for we had begun at the same level. But

we went different ways—he—higher and higher—and I—lower and lower. And today he is rich and famous and I'm a poor devil of a journalist dying in a public hospital. But what does that matter?—what does that matter—now that the moment has come when I can crush him? And I *will* crush him—if he only comes—if he only comes. That was your sweetheart who came to see you this afternoon, Jackwerth—I know it. But what is all the ardor with which we wait for the coming of one we love—compared to the longing for someone we hate, someone we've hated all our lives—only we've forgotten to tell him so!

Florian. You mustn't let yourself get so excited, Mr. Rademacher. You're losing your voice.

Rademacher. Don't worry—once he is here I'll be able to talk.

Florian. Oh, you never can tell. Say, listen, Mr. Rademacher—I have a suggestion to make. Suppose we have a rehearsal? No, I'm not joking—I know—that's my business. Don't you see—it all depends on *how* you say things! What good will it do you if you say to him, "You are a rascal and I hate you?" that won't get over. He'll think to himself, "Let him scold, that's cheap, while he's here in bed with 103 degrees of fever and I'm walking about smoking a good cigar."

Rademacher. Oh, I'll have something more to say to him. No one minds being called a rascal nowadays. But if I tell him that he was ridiculous all his life, ridiculous in the eyes of those he loved most—he won't get over that so easily.

Florian. All right, talk it out—talk it out. Now imagine I'm your friend. Here I stand, pockets full of money, head full of conceit. (*Acting*) Well, here I am, old friend, you have something to say to me? Well? (*In his natural voice*) There now, go on.

Rademacher (*feverish, talking himself into angry excitement*). Yes, I sent for you. But not to bid you farewell, in memory of our old friendship—no—I have something to tell you—before it is too late.

Florian (*acting*). Don't keep me in suspense, old

man. What is it you want to tell me? (*Change as before*) Well—go on—go on.

Rademacher. You think yourself better than I? My dear friend, you and I are not of the Great, and in the depths where we belong there is small difference—in hours like these. All your greatness is sham and pretense. Your fame? Merely a heap of newspaper notices that will be scattered to the winds the day after your death. Your friends? Flatterers who cringe to success; envious parasites who clench their fists at you when your back is turned; fools who find you just small enough for their admiration. But you are clever enough to realize all this yourself, at times. I didn't trouble you to come here just to tell you that. What I am going to tell you—it may be despicable of me—but it's astonishing how little we care whether we are despicable or not when we know we'll have no tomorrow to be ashamed of it in. . . . (*Rises*) I've come near throwing it in your face a hundred times during the past few years—whenever we chanced to meet on the street and you were gracious enough to stop for a few words with me. My dear friend, not only do I know you as you are —and hundreds of others do, too—but your own belovèd wife knows you better than you dream. She realized what you were twenty years ago—in the prime of your youth and success. Yes, she realized it—and I knew that she did—for I was her lover two whole years. Many a time she came to me in disgust at your hollowness, your utter nothingness—came to me ready to run off with me. But I was poor and she was a coward—and so she stayed with you—and deceived you. It was easier that way, for all of us.

Florian (*acting*). Ha! Wretch! You lie!

Rademacher. I? (*As if awakening*) Ah, yes—you take the key, Jackwerth. If he won't believe me, the letters are in my desk. You shall be my executor. There are many things in my desk—some treasures, perhaps. Who knows? It may be only necessary for me to die—to have them appreciated. Yes, then they'd make a fuss about me, especially when they know that I've died in

poverty and misery—for I am dying in poverty and misery, as I have lived. Then there'll be speeches over my grave—you'll hear them talk about devotion to duty—great ability—a victim to his profession. Yes, that's true, Florian Jackwerth, as long as I've had any profession I've been its victim. Do you know what's killing me? No—not those Latin names on the board up there. Oh, no—what's killing me is the bitterness of having to bow to people I despise, having to toady to them for a job—it's disgust at having to write things I did not believe to keep myself from starving: it's anger at having to grind out stuff for infamous slave-drivers who had stolen and swindled a fortune for themselves, and I had to help them do it with my talent. But I can't complain. I've received my share of the general contempt and hatred for them—my share of *that,* if of nothing else. (*The* NURSE *comes in again*)

Nurse. The doctor's coming back.

Rademacher (*anxiously*). Is he alone?

Nurse. No, there's a gentleman with him. (RADEMACHER *sinks back in his chair with a sigh of gratitude*)

Florian. Pull yourself together now. Sorry I can't stay and see. (*He slips out quickly as* HALMSCHLAEGER *and* WEIHGAST *come in*)

Halmschlaeger. The patient is in here.

Weihgast (*he is a handsomely dressed, well-preserved man of about fifty-five. His beard is slightly gray*). In here? (*Goes to* RADEMACHER, *speaks cordially*) Why, Rademacher—is it really you? And this is how we meet again? My dear old friend.

Rademacher. I thank you for coming.

Halmschlaeger (*has motioned to* NURSE *to bring a chair for* WEIHGAST) And now, Mr. Weihgast, may I, as physician in charge, ask you not to let this conversation last more than fifteen minutes? When the time is up, I will take the liberty of returning to lead you out.

Weihgast. Thank you, doctor, you are very kind.

Halmschlaeger. It is I who have to thank you. It required no slight sacrifice——

Weihgast. Oh, no, indeed. Don't mention it.

Halmschlaeger. And now, Mr. Rademacher, good-bye for a few moments. (*Threatens him amiably as if warning him not to get excited, then speaks to the* NURSE *and goes out with her*)

Weihgast (*he has given his hat, overcoat and cane to the* NURSE, *now sits down near* RADEMACHER, *speaks warmly, almost with sincerity*). And now, my dear Rademacher, what an idea! Why did you let them bring you here to the public hospital?

Rademacher. I'm quite content, they take good care of me here.

Weihgast. Yes, yes, of course. I know you're in good hands. Dr. Halmschlaeger is a very capable physician and what is more, he is a good man. If, indeed, one can separate the individual of himself from the individual in his professional capacity! But still—you'll pardon me—why didn't you send for me?

Rademacher. How could I think——

Weihgast. Even if you haven't thought of your old friend these many years—surely you know I would be very ready—under such circumstances——

Rademacher. Don't let's talk of that——

Weihgast. As you wish, it was well meant. And it's not too late yet. Dr. Halmschlaeger tells me that it's only a question of time and good nursing—you will be out of the hospital in a few weeks and then we can arrange for a rest in the country——

Rademacher. There's little use in discussing that now.

Weihgast. Yes, yes. Dr. Halmschlaeger told me you were depressed in spirits. (*He does not like* RADEMACHER'*s steady glance but forces himself to endure it*) But you sent for me? You wanted to speak to me? Well, I am ready. Why do you smile? Oh, no, I see, it's only the reflection of the light. The light is rather poor here. Well, I am waiting. I shall have to tell Dr. Halmschlaeger that you made no use of the first five minutes. Well? (RADEMACHER *opens his lips several times as if to speak, but does not say anything. There is a pause*)

Weihgast. And how have things gone with you all this time? (*Slightly embarrassed*) Hm, that was an awkward question, I know—but I confess I'm just a little embarrassed. To judge by appearances, it would seem as if my lot had been the happier of the two. Still—if we only look at things clearly—who suffers the greatest disappointment in life? Isn't it always the man who has apparently achieved the most? That sounds like a paradox, but it is the truth. Ah—if I should tell you—my life has been nothing but care and struggle! I don't know whether you've been following the more recent movements in literature—they're falling on me like a pack of hungry wolves—the "younger generation," I mean. And ten years ago I was counted among the younger generation myself. Now they are trying to dethrone me. These new reviews—it sickens me just to read them. They treat me with scorn, with mock condescension—it's outrageous! Here I've worked and striven, and given of the best that was in me—oh, you may be glad you're out of that sort of thing! If I could choose, if I could begin all over again——

Rademacher. Well?

Weihgast. I'd rather be a peasant tilling the soil, or a shepherd on the hills, or an Arctic explorer searching for the Pole—oh, anything except a literary worker. But it's not too late yet.

Rademacher (*with a strange smile*). Are you going in search of the Pole?

Weihgast. No—but early next season there'll be a new play of mine out. Then they'll see—they'll see—I'm not so easily conquered! Just wait—just wait! And if all goes well, old friend, you must be there, too. I promise to send you tickets, although I must say your paper has done very little for me. They completely ignored my last two books—but you have nothing to do with that department, have you? What nonsense I am talking—now tell me, what is it you want to say to me? If it hurts you to talk loud I can move nearer. (*There is a pause*) And what will my wife say when I tell her that our old friend Rademacher is ill in the Public Hos-

pital?—it's nothing but your pride, Rademacher, your confounded pride—but we won't talk about that now. Anyway, my wife is not in Vienna just now, she's gone to Abbazia. She's not been well for some time.

Rademacher. Nothing serious, I hope.

Weihgast (*pressing his hand*). Thank God, no! Ah, my dear friend, then I should be indeed unfortunate. When I am with her, I find myself again. I find my belief in myself, which I had all but lost—I find courage to work, desire to live. And the longer I live the more I see that this is the only true companionship. For my children——!

Rademacher. What about them? How are they?

Weihgast. My daughter is married. Yes, I'm twice a grandfather, although I know I don't look it. And the boy—the little boy!—is serving his volunteer year—getting into debt—he's just had a duel with a young Baron Wallerskirch—about a woman. Ah, dear friend, it's the same old foolishness—we grow old—life goes on its way about us.

Rademacher. Yes—yes. (*There is a pause*)

Weihgast. But our time is nearly up. I am still waiting—what did you want to say to me? I am ready to do whatever you ask. Shall I speak to the Concordia people? Or would you like me to inquire at the editorial office of the *New Day*—in case you recover soon? Or, perhaps—pardon me for mentioning such a thing—if you need money——

Rademacher. No—no, I don't need anything. I just wanted to see you again, old friend—that is all. (*Holds out his hand*)

Weihgast. Indeed! I am deeply touched! And then, when you are well again—we must see each other—more often—— (*There is an embarrassing pause. The ticking of the clock in the larger room can be heard plainly*)

Halmschlaeger (*coming in*). Here I am again. Not too punctual, I hope.

Weihgast (*rises, evidently relieved*). No. We have finished what we had to say.

Halmschlaeger. That's good. I hope our patient will be calmer now.

Rademacher. Thank you.

Weihgast. Good-bye for the moment then, old friend. If our doctor here will permit it, I'll look in again in a few days.

Halmschlaeger. Certainly. I will give orders to have you admitted at any hour.

Weihgast. Oh, please don't make an exception for me. (HALMSCHLAEGER *motions to the* NURSE *who helps* WEIHGAST *into his overcoat*)

Weihgast (*to* RADEMACHER). Good-bye once more—and a speedy recovery! Don't lose heart! (*He goes to the door with* HALMSCHLAEGER)

Florian (*slips in through curtain*). Good evening, doctor.

Halmschlaeger. See here—aren't you in bed yet?

Weihgast (*aside to* HALMSCHLAEGER). Who's that man? He stares at me so queerly.

Halmschlaeger. He's a poor devil of an actor——

Weihgast. Indeed?

Halmschlaeger. ——who doesn't suspect that he'll be in his grave in less than a week.

Weihgast. Ah, indeed? (*His glance meets* FLORIAN'S)

Halmschlaeger. That's why I'm not more strict with him. There's no sense in keeping rules for the dying.

Weihgast. You are quite right. I am really glad of this opportunity of knowing you better, of looking in on you at your work, as it were. It interests me greatly for several reasons.

Halmschlaeger. May I ask a question? Was it really something so important—what your friend had to say?

Weihgast. Not in the least. We knew each other well—many years ago, and he wanted to see me once more—that was all. But I think my coming has quieted him. (*The* NURSE *holds back the curtains and curtseys.* WEIHGAST *hands her a tip and goes out with* HALMSCHLAEGER, *followed by the* NURSE)

Florian (*hurries to* RADEMACHER). Well, what hap-

pened? That man must have tremendous self-control. I can read faces—but I didn't see anything in his. How did he take it?

Rademacher (*does not heed him*). How pitiful are they—who must keep on living.

Florian. Mr. Rademacher, what has happened? How about the key to your desk?

Rademacher (*as if awakening*). My desk? Oh, do what you like with it—burn it up if you want to.

Florian. And the treasures in it? The masterpieces?

Rademacher. Masterpieces? And even if they were —there is no posterity except for the living. (*As if seeing a vision*) Now he's downstairs—he walks down the drive—he goes out through the gate—out into the streets —the lamps are lit, the wagons roll on—people come and go—come and go—— (*He rises very slowly*)

Florian (*looking at him sharply*). Mr. Rademacher!——

Rademacher. What have I to do with him? What can his happiness or his cares matter to me? What should we two have to say to one another? (*He catches at* FLORIAN'S *hand*) What have people like you and I to do with those who will still be alive tomorrow?

Florian (*frightened*). What do you want of me? Mrs. Paschanda! (*The* NURSE *hurries in with a light*)

Rademacher (*drops* FLORIAN'S *hand*). Put out that light—I shall not—need it—— (*He falls back in his chair*)

Florian (*clinging with both hands to the curtain*). But now—isn't he——?

CURTAIN

LITERATURE

A COMEDY

CHARACTERS

MARGARET

BARON CLEMENS

GILBERT

LITERATURE

SCENE.—MARGARET'S *sitting room, the usual furnished room, neatly but simply furnished. A small fireplace to the right before which stands an armchair. A table, a small desk, a wardrobe and several chairs make up the furnishing of the room. There are two windows at back, and doors right and left.* BARON CLEMENS *is lounging in an armchair by the fire, smoking a cigarette and reading the paper. He wears a modish morning suit of dark gray.* MARGARET *is standing by the window when the curtain rises. She wanders about the room, comes up behind* CLEMENS *and plays lightly with his hair. She seems nervous and uneasy.*

Clemens (*reaches back for her hand and kisses it while he continues to read the paper*). Horner is sure of himself—or rather of me. Listen, Waterloo, five to one; Barometer, twenty to one; Kiss Me, seven to one; Attila, sixteen to one——

Margaret. Sixteen to one?

Clemens. Lord Byron, one and a half to one; that's us, my dear.

Margaret. I know.

Clemens. And it's six weeks yet before the race.

Margaret. Horner appears to think it a dead certainty.

Clemens. Bravo! How she has learned all these phrases already!

Margaret. I knew those phrases before I knew you, my dear. Is it settled that you are to ride Lord Byron yourself?

Clemens. What a question! It's the Ladies' Cup! Who should I let ride for me? The odds wouldn't be

any one and a half to one, I can tell you—if Horner didn't know that I was to ride.

Margaret. I believe that. You do look beautiful on a horse, dearest, perfectly stunning! I shall never forget that day in Munich—the day I met you, too——

Clemens. Ugh!—don't remind me of that. That was my unlucky day. Windisch had ten lengths advantage of me at the start or he never would have won that race. But this one is my game all right. And then the very next day off we go, you and I.

Margaret. Evening?

Clemens. Yes, why?

Margaret. I'm taking for granted that we get married in the morning.

Clemens. Quite right, my love.

Margaret. I'm so happy! (*Kisses him*) And where do we go?

Clemens. To the estate, of course. I thought that was settled.

Margaret. Oh, yes, for later. But can't we have a few days on the Riviera first?

Clemens. That depends on whether I win the Ladies' Cup or not.

Margaret. It's a dead certainty!

Clemens. And, besides, there's no style to the Riviera in April.

Margaret. What difference does that make?

Clemens. It makes considerable difference, my dear. You still have certain notions as to what is correct—do forgive me for saying it—but they remind me of the comic papers.

Margaret. Clemens!

Clemens. Well, we can talk it over later. (*Takes up his paper*) The Clown, fifteen to one.

Margaret. The Clown? He's not to run.

Clemens. How do you know?

Margaret. Szigrati told me.

Clemens. And when, pray?

Margaret. This morning in Freudenau, when you were talking to Milner.

Clemens. Szigrati is not the proper company for you.

Margaret. Jealous?

Clemens. Hardly. But from now on I think I'd better introduce you everywhere as my fiancée. (MARGARET *kisses him*) And what was Szigrati telling you?

Margaret. He told me he didn't intend to run the Clown in the Ladies' Cup.

Clemens. You don't want to believe everything Szigrati tells you. He may be starting that rumor to make the odds longer.

Margaret. Why, that's gambling!

Clemens. Did you think there was no gambling about a horse race? It's only another kind of business for most men. A man like Szigrati doesn't care a tuppenny for sport. He might as well be speculating in stocks. But we can allow him a hundred to one on the Clown if he wants it.

Margaret. I don't know about that. I saw him this morning and he's a very handsome horse.

Clemens. You are coming on! Where did you see the Clown?

Margaret. This morning. Butters rode him round the paddock right behind Kiss Me.

Clemens. Butters doesn't ride for Szigrati, that must have been a stable boy. But the Clown is deceiving, he's all looks and no wind. You'll soon learn the difference, though, with your talent. It's incredible, really, how quickly you've worked your way into all these things. You exceed my wildest expectations

Margaret. I don't see why. You know perfectly well that all these things are not so very new to me. People of position came often to my parents' house, Count Libowski, oh, and ever so many others. And then, when I was living with my husband——

Clemens. Yes, yes—of course. I have no objection, on principle, to the cotton industry——

Margaret. Even if my husband did own a cotton mill, what has that to do with my personal point of view? I went my own way mentally. But don't let's talk of those days, they're far enough off now, thank fortune.

Clemens. But there were other days, nearer to the present.

Margaret. Naturally. Well?

Clemens. I meant—you couldn't have heard much about sporting interests in the crowd you went with in Munich, as far as I can judge.

Margaret. Suppose you stop reproaching me for the company you found me in?

Clemens. It wasn't meant for a reproach. Only I never can and never will understand how you came to be with such people.

Margaret. You talk as if they were a gang of thieves.

Clemens. I give you my word some of them looked like it. What I can't understand is how you, with your predilection for—well, let's say for cleanliness and fine perfumes—could endure sitting at the same table with them.

Margaret (*smiling*). You sat there yourself.

Clemens. Near them—not with them. And it was for your sake—only for your sake, as you very well know. However, I don't deny that some of them improved on acquaintance, there were some really interesting people among them. You mustn't think for a moment that I look down on a man because his clothes are shabby or badly cut, that isn't it. But there was something in their manners, in their general behavior, that got on my nerves.

Margaret. I can't see why.

Clemens. Now don't be touchy, my dear. Haven't I said that some of them were really interesting? Still, I can't understand how a lady could feel at home in their company for any length of time.

Margaret. You forget, my dear Clemens, that in a certain sense I am—or was—one of them.

Clemens. Oh, come now!

Margaret. They were artists.

Clemens. Here we are, back to that subject again!

Margaret. Yes, it's my one constant grief that you can't keep up with me there.

Clemens. Can't keep up with you? Oh, come now. I'm not so stupid as all that. But you know what I object to in your writing—you know it's a purely personal objection.

Margaret. There are many women who might have done worse things, in my position, than to write poems.

Clemens. But such poems—such poems! That's just the point. (*Takes a small book from the mantelpiece*) I give you my word, every time I see this book, every time I think of it even, I am ashamed that you should have written it.

Margaret. You can't understand. That's all. Don't be angry, dear. If you did understand, you would be quite perfect and I suppose that is not to be. But what is it that worries you so? You know I haven't experienced any of all that——

Clemens. I hope not.

Margaret. It is all pure imagination.

Clemens. That's just it. How can a lady *imagine* anything like this? (*Reads*)

"Drunk as with wine I hang upon thy neck
And I would suck thy soul from out thy lips."

(*With a shake of his head*) How can a lady write stuff like that? And have it printed? Why, every man that reads it will think of the authoress and of the neck and—well, all the rest of it.

Margaret. But when I tell you that there never was such a neck?

Clemens. I know there wasn't—that's my good fortune—and yours, too, Margaret. But how the deuce did you ever imagine such things? Your first husband can't have inspired all these glowing love poems—you say he never understood you.

Margaret. Never. That's why I left him. How could *I* exist with a creature who cared for nothing but eating and drinking and cotton?

Clemens. Yes, yes. But that's three years ago, and these poems have been written since.

Margaret. Well, consider my position.

Clemens. You weren't starving. Your husband was mighty decent to you in the matter of money, I must say. You didn't have to earn your living. And even if they gave you a hundred guldens for a poem—I don't suppose they pay more than that—there was no need for you to write such a book.

Margaret. Dearest Clem—when I speak of my position I don't mean merely in regard to money. I mean my state of mind. You have no idea what that was—when I met you it was much better, I had learned to find myself as it were—but at first! I was so helpless—so distracted—I tried everything I could think of—I painted, I even gave English lessons in the Pension where I lived. Just think of it—I was only twenty-two, a divorced wife, and I hadn't a single soul on whom——

Clemens. Why didn't you stay in Vienna?

Margaret. Because I had quarrelled with my family. None of them understood me. There wasn't one of them could realize that a woman might ask for something more in life than just a husband, and good clothes and a social position. Ah, if I had had a child, it might all have been easier to bear—perhaps—perhaps not, who knows? I am a complex nature. And, besides, why do you complain? What better could I have done than to go to Munich? Would I have met you if I hadn't?

Clemens. But that wasn't why you went there.

Margaret. I wanted to be free—mentally free. I wanted to see whether I had the ability to make my way of myself alone. And you can't deny that it looked as if I had that ability—I was well on the road to success and fame.

Clemens. Hm!

Margaret. But you were dearer to me than fame.

Clemens (*good-naturedly*). And more certain.

Margaret. I never thought of that. I loved you from the first. You were the sort of man I had longed for in my dreams. I knew that I could be really happy only with such a man. Birth, breeding—it's not an empty

word after all—there's nothing like it. You know that's why I sometimes think——

Clemens. Well?

Margaret. I think sometimes there may be noble blood in my veins.

Clemens. How?

Margaret. It might be possible——

Clemens. I don't follow——

Margaret. I told you of the noblemen who came to my father's house——

Clemens. What has that to do with it?

Margaret. Who knows——?

Clemens. Margaret! How can you say such a thing?

Margaret. One can't say what one really thinks—to you. That's your only fault. Otherwise, you're quite perfect. (*She nestles up to him*) Oh, I love you so—so unbelievably! That very first evening when you came to the Café with Wangenhaim, I knew that you were the One Man for me. You came among us like a being from another world.

Clemens. I should hope so. And you didn't look as if you belonged there either. When I think of those people! That Russian girl, for instance, with her short hair, you know, the one that looked like a college student only she didn't wear the cap.

Margaret. That was Miss Baranzewitch, a very talented painter.

Clemens. Yes, I know, you showed her to me one day at the Pinakothek, she was up on a ladder copying a picture. And then the man with the Polish name——

Margaret (*begins*). Zrkd——

Clemens. Never mind, you don't have to say it now. He read something aloud one evening when I was there and didn't seem the least bit ashamed of it.

Margaret. He's remarkably talented.

Clemens. Oh, yes, they're all talented—in the Café. And then that fellow, that irritating——

Margaret. Who do you mean?

Clemens. You know who I mean—the man who used to make tactless remarks about the aristocracy.

Margaret. Oh, you mean Gilbert?

Clemens. Yes, that's the one. I don't want to defend all of my class, there are scoundrels everywhere, even among the poets, I've been told. But it's beastly bad manners, when one of us is present——

Margaret. That was just his way.

Clemens. I had to keep a tight rein on myself,—or I should have said something——

Margaret. He was one of the most interesting, in spite of it. And then—you know he was jealous of you.

Clemens (*drily*). Yes, I thought I noticed something of the kind. (*There is a pause*)

Margaret. Oh, they were all jealous of you—you were so different. And then you know, they all made love to me more or less, just because I treated them all alike. You saw that, didn't you? What are you laughing at?

Clemens. It's funny, isn't it? If anyone had prophesied that I should marry an habitué of the Café Maximillan! I liked the two young painters best of all, they were like something out of a farce. You know, the two that looked so much alike and shared everything in common, even the Russian lady on the ladder, apparently.

Margaret. I never bothered about such things.

Clemens. You know, I think the two were Jews.

Margaret. Why?

Clemens. Well, the jokes they made—and their accent——

Margaret. You might spare me these anti-semitic remarks.

Clemens. There—there! Don't be offended. I know you're half-breed yourself. But really I have no objections to Jews. I had a tutor once, crammed me in Greek for the exams.—He was a Jew and a fine fellow, too—yes, yes, one meets all sorts of people. I don't regret having met your crowd in Munich, it's all in the game. But I must have seemed like the prince come to rescue you.

Margaret. Yes, you did. (***With her arms around his neck***) Dearest Clem——

Clemens. What are you laughing at?

Margaret. A sudden thought.

Clemens. Let's have it.

Margaret. "Drunk as with wine I hang upon thy neck."

Clemens (irritated). Oh, please--why must you always spoil the illusion?

Margaret. Tell me, Clemens—then you really wouldn't be proud to have the woman you love—your wife—become a great and famous poetess?

Clemens. I've told you already—you may call me stupid and narrow-minded if you like—but I assure you solemnly that if you begin to write such poems again, and even if they are written to me—and you print them and tell all the world of our love—I tell you then that the marriage is off, and so am I and you will never see me again.

Margaret. And *this* is the man who has had at least a dozen affairs that were town talk!

Clemens. Oh, bosh!—Town talk! I never told when one of them hung drunk on my neck, and had it printed that anybody could buy it for a gulden and a half. That's the point. I know there are people who live by that sort of thing, but I call it indecent. I tell you, to me it's worse than for a woman to pose in tights as a Greek statue at Ronacher's—much worse. The Greek statue doesn't say Boo. But the things these poets say—it's outrageous!

Margaret (uneasy). Dearest, you forget that the poet does not always tell the truth.

Clemens. Does it make it any better when he lies about it?

Margaret. We don't call that lying, we call it "conventionalizing."

Clemens. H'm! That's another new word.

Margaret. Or we write of things we've never experienced, things we've dreamed or only invented.

Clemens. Please don't say *we,* Margaret. You're not one of them, thank the Lord.

Margaret. Who knows?

Clemens. What do you mean?

Margaret (*tenderly*). Dearest Clem—I must tell you——

Clemens. Tell me what?

Margaret. I am still one of them—I have not stopped writing——

Clemens. How is that?

Margaret. I am still writing, or rather I have just written something. The impulse to create is stronger than others can understand. I should have gone mad if I had not written——

Clemens. And what have you written now?

Margaret. A novel. There was so much that was tugging at my heart—it would have suffocated me. I said nothing to you thus far, but you must know finally. Kunigel is delighted with it.

Clemens. And who is Kunigel?

Margaret. My publisher.

Clemens. Then someone has read the novel?

Margaret. Of course, and many more will read it. You will be proud of me, Clemens.

Clemens. You are quite mistaken, my dear girl. I—I can't express what I think of your conduct. What's in the book?

Margaret. That's not so easy to state. My novel says about everything there is to be said about everything.

Clemens. Good Lord!

Margaret. And that's why I can promise you that I will never touch a pen again. It will not be necessary.

Clemens. Margaret, do you really love me?

Margaret. How can you ask it? I love you, only you. Whatever I may have seen or observed, my own experience has been very barren. I have waited for you——

Clemens. Then bring me your novel.

Margaret. I don't follow——

Clemens. You say you *had* to write it. Very well—but no one need read it. Bring it here and we'll throw it into the fire.

Margaret. Clem!

Clemens. I demand it of you—I have the right.

Margaret. But it isn't possible——

Clemens. And why not? If I wish it, if I make everything else dependent upon it—you understand? Maybe it will be possible then?

Margaret. But Clemens, the novel is already printed.

Clemens. Printed!

Margaret. Yes, it will be on sale in a day or two.

Clemens. Margaret! And you never told me a word of all this?

Margaret. I couldn't, dearest. Wait till it comes out and then you'll forgive me—more than that, you will be proud of me.

Clemens. My dear girl, this is a serious matter.

Margaret. Clemens!

Clemens. Good-bye, Margaret!

Margaret. Clemens! You're going?

Clemens. It looks that way.

Margaret. And when will you come back?

Clemens. I can't tell now. Good-bye.

Margaret (*tries to hold him back*). Clemens!

Clemens (*shakes her off*). Good-bye. (*He goes out*)

Margaret. Clemens! Clemens! What does this mean? Has he left me? What shall I do? Clemens, is this the end? Oh, no, it cannot be—I must follow him. (*She looks about wildly for her hat. The bell rings outside*) Ah! he's come back—he just wanted to frighten me. Oh, my Clemens! (*She runs to the door, then starts back as she hears* GILBERT'S *voice*)

Gilbert (*outside*). I told you she was at home. (*He enters*) Good afternoon, Margaret.

Margaret (*in utter surprise*). You here!

Gilbert. Yes, even I, Amandus Gilbert.

Margaret. This is a surprise.

Gilbert. So I perceive. But without reason. I am passing through this town on my way to Italy. My real reason for coming here was to bring you—in memory of our former comradeship—a copy of my latest book. (*He holds the volume towards her. When she does not take it, he lays it on the table*)

Margaret (*mechanically*). Thank you, you are very kind.

Gilbert. Don't mention it. You have a certain right to this book. (*He looks about the room*) So this is where you're living now?

Margaret. Yes, but——

Gilbert. I know, merely temporary. Rather nice for a furnished room. But these family portraits on the walls would drive me crazy.

Margaret. My landlady is the widow of a General.

Gilbert. Don't bother to make excuses.

Margaret. Excuses? I had no such intention.

Gilbert. Strange, isn't it, to think that——

Margaret. To think what?

Gilbert. Why not? I was just thinking of your little room in the Steinsdorfer Strasse with the balcony over the Isar. Do you remember it, Margaret? (MARGARET *turns away as if she had not heard. There is a pause*)

Gilbert (*suddenly*). Margaret, you behaved atrociously!

Margaret. What!

Gilbert. Or would you prefer a less definite expression? No other word fits the case. And it was all so unnecessary. An honest and open confession would have answered every purpose. But to run away, by night and fog——

Margaret. It was neither night nor fog. I left Munich on the eight-thirty express on a bright sunny morning.

Gilbert. Still, we might have said good-bye. (*He sits down*)

Margaret. The Baron may return at any moment.

Gilbert. Well? You're hardly likely to have told him that you have lain in my arms and adored me. I am merely an old friend from Munich. I suppose your old friends may visit you?

Margaret. Any other—but not you.

Gilbert. Oh, you misunderstand. I come now, really, only as a good friend. All else is over and done with forever. (*He points to the book*) You will see.

Margaret. What is that?

Gilbert. My latest novel.

Margaret. You write novels?

Gilbert. I do.

Margaret. And since when?

Gilbert. I do not catch your meaning.

Margaret. Why—I seem to remember that your special field was the short sketch, the observing of everyday happenings——

Gilbert (*excited*). My field? The world is my field. I write what I please. I permit no limitations to my talent. I know of no reason why I should not write a novel——

Margaret. Oh, well—but it was the opinion of authoritative criticism that——

Gilbert. And what is authoritative criticism?

Margaret. I remember, for instance, one article by Neumann——

Gilbert (*angry*). Neumann is an idiot—I knocked him down.

Margaret. You did?

Gilbert. Mentally, I mean—mentally. You were as angry as I was about it at the time. We agreed absolutely that Neumann was an idiot. "How dare this nonenity," these were your very words, "how dare this nonenity venture to set a limit for your talent? How dare he attempt to strangle your next book before it has seen the light?" That was what you said, and now you quote this space-filling fool?

Margaret. Please don't scream so! My landlady——

Gilbert. I cannot stop to consider generals' widows when my nerves are all of a quiver.

Margaret. But what have I said to make you so angry? You are ridiculously sensitive.

Gilbert. Sensitive? You call me sensitive? You? The woman who went into hysterics if the youngest cub reporter in the tiniest sheet dared to say one word against her!

Margaret. I don't remember that there ever was a word said against me.

Gilbert. Oh, indeed! Well, you may be right. Even the press can be polite to pretty women.

Margaret. Polite? Do you mean to insinuate that I was praised from mere politeness? And your own opinion——

Gilbert. I don't take back anything I may have said. I would merely like to remind you that your few good poems were written during the time of our acquaintance.

Margaret. You take the credit to yourself then?

Gilbert. Would you have written them without me? Are they not written to me?

Margaret. No.

Gilbert. No? Incredible!

Margaret. They were not written to you.

Gilbert. I am dumfounded. Shall I remind you of the situations in which your finest verses were created?

Margaret. My poems were written to an ideal—(GILBERT *points to himself*)—an ideal whose earthly incarnation you happened to be just then.

Gilbert. Excellent. Where did you get that? You know what the Frenchman says in such a case? *"C'est de la litterature!"*

Margaret (*mocks his tone*). *Ce n'est pas de la litterature."* But it's the truth. Or did you really believe that I meant you when I sang of a slender youth with clustering curls? You were fat even then—and this was never curly. (*She passes her hand lightly over his hair.* GILBERT *catches her hand and kisses it*)

Margaret (*gently*). Nonsense.

Gilbert. You thought they were curls then. Or you called them curls—one can stretch a point considerably for the sake of sound and rhythm. Didn't I call you, in one of my own sonnets, "my clever maiden," and yet you were neither clever nor—no, I won't be unjust, you *were* clever, impertinently, disgustingly clever. And you won out. But why should I wonder at it—you were always something of a snob. Well, now you have your desire. You have landed him safely, your high-born youth with the well-kept hands and the neglected brain, the famous jockey and fencer, tennis player, dead shot, and supreme

breaker of hearts—brrrrr! Marlitt herself could not have invented anything more inanely disgusting. Still, I venture to question whether all this will content you in the long run—you who have known something Higher. I can only say this, in my eyes you have become a Pariah of the Emotions.

Margaret. You thought that out on the train.

Gilbert. I didn't—it just occurred to me now.

Margaret. Better make a note of it. It's a good phrase.

Gilbert. I have another for you. Listen. Once you were the Woman, now you are only the Female. Yes, that is it. What can possibly attract you to that man, what, but the lowest, the most animal——

Margaret. You needn't talk.

Gilbert. My dear, I always had a soul as well.

Margaret. Yes, that was all—sometimes.

Gilbert. Don't attempt to degrade our love, you will not succeed. It will still remain the greatest thing in your life.

Margaret. And to think that I endured this sort of talk for a whole year!

Gilbert. Endured it? You reveled in it. Don't be ungrateful, I am not. However atrocious your behavior at the last may have been, I shall not let it spoil the memory for me. I will even say more—it was all a part of it.

Margaret. You don't say?

Gilbert. Yes, you have a right to know it now. Just as you began to turn from me, drawn by your longing for the warm stable—*"la nostralgie de l'écurie,"* just at that time I was beginning to realize that I had done with you.

Margaret. Not really?

Gilbert. It was characteristic of you that you did not notice this fact. Yes, I was done with you, I no longer needed you. All that you could give me had been given, your mission was ended. You knew this in the depths of your soul, you knew it, unconsciously you were conscious of it——

Margaret. Oh, don't be so brilliant.

Gilbert (does not heed the interruption). Your time was over. Our love had served its purpose. I do not regret it.

Margaret. But I do.

Gilbert. Excellent! For the connoisseur this little remark covers all the deep-lying difference between the artist and the amateur. To you our love is now nothing more than the memory of a few wild nights, of a few deep talks in the shadows of the trees. I have made a work of art of it.

Margaret. And so have I.

Gilbert. What do you mean by that?

Margaret. I can do whatever you can. I have written a novel, too, a novel into which I have woven our relations. I have given our love, or what we called by that name, to immortality.

Gilbert. I wouldn't talk about immortality, if I were you, until the second edition is out.

Margaret. It is rather a different matter when I write a novel—or when you do it.

Gilbert. Rather.

Margaret. You are a free man. You do not need to steal the hours for your art. You do not risk your future by doing so.

Gilbert. And do you?

Margaret. Yes, I have done it. Clemens left me just now, because I told him I had written a novel.

Gilbert. He left you? For good?

Margaret. I do not know. It may be. He left me in anger and I haven't yet learned what to expect of him.

Gilbert. Then he forbids you to write? He does not want you to use your brain. Excellent! And this is what we call the Flower of the Nation! And you? Are you not ashamed to experience the same sensations for an idiot like this, as for——

Margaret. I forbid you to speak of him that way. You will never be able to understand him.

Gilbert. Hah!

Margaret. You don't understand why he objects to

my writing. It is simply because of his love for me. He feels that when I write I am in a world he cannot enter. And then, too, he is ashamed for me that I should bare my inmost soul for all the world to see. He wants to keep me for himself—for himself alone. And this is the reason why he rushed away—no, not rushed—Clemens is not the sort of man to rush——

Gilbert. Well observed. But he is gone, we need not discuss the gait. And he has gone because he cannot endure that you should follow your impulse to create—that you should work.

Margaret. Ah, yes, if he could only understand. But it seems that cannot be. I could be the best, the truest wife in the world if only I could find the one perfect man.

Gilbert. Which means to say that he is not the perfect man either.

Margaret. I said nothing of the kind.

Gilbert. Can't you see he is enslaving you—that he's ruining you—that he is trying to crush out the best in you just from pure selfishness? Think of the woman you once were. Think of the freedom you enjoyed when you loved me—freedom to develop heart and brain. Think of the noble minds that were your daily companions: think of the ardent band of disciples who sat at my feet and included you in their worship. Don't you wish yourself back again? Don't you sometimes think of the little room with the balcony—and the Isar murmuring below. (*He takes her hand and draws her close to him*)

Margaret. Ah, no—no.

Gilbert. It can all be again. It needn't be just the Isar—any river will do. Listen, Margaret, I have a suggestion to make. If he returns, tell him you have some urgent affairs to settle in Munich and spend the time with me there. You are as beautiful as ever—we can be happy again, Margaret, happy as we once were. (*Very near her*) Do you remember? "Drunk as with wine, I hang upon thy neck——"

Margaret (*tears herself away*). No—no—go away, please—leave me—— I—I don't love you any more.

Gilbert. Ah! Then—I beg your pardon. (*Pause*) Good-bye, Margaret.

Margaret. Good-bye.

Gilbert. Good-bye. (*Turns back again*) Won't you give me a copy of your book as a parting gift? I gave you mine.

Margaret. It isn't out yet. I can't get a copy until next week.

Gilbert. May I ask what sort of a novel it is?

Margaret. It is the story of my life. But, of course, I have veiled the facts so that I can't be recognized.

Gilbert. How did you do that?

Margaret. Quite simply. The heroine is not a poetess, she is a painter.

Gilbert. Very clever.

Margaret. Her first husband is not a cotton manufacturer, but a stock broker. And then it is not a tenor with whom she deceives him.

Gilbert. Ha! ha! ha!

Margaret. What are you laughing at?

Gilbert. So you deceived him with a tenor? That's news to me.

Margaret. Who said I did?

Gilbert. You yourself, this very minute.

Margaret. Nonsense. I said the heroine of my novel deceived her husband with a baritone.

Gilbert. A bass would be more dramatic, a mezzo-soprano more piquante.

Margaret. Then it is not to Munich she goes, but to Dresden. And there she has an affair with a sculptor.

Gilbert. Which is me, veiled?

Margaret. Very much veiled. The sculptor is young, handsome, and a genius. And yet she leaves him.

Gilbert. For whom?

Margaret. Guess?

Gilbert. For a jockey, presumably.

Margaret. Silly!

Gilbert. For a Count? A Prince?

Margaret. No, he is an Archduke.

Gilbert (*bowing*). You have indeed spared no expense.

Margaret. An Archduke who leaves the Court for her sake—marries her and takes her to the Canary Islands.

Gilbert. Canary Islands? Delicious. And then?

Margaret. That ends it.

Gilbert. It will certainly interest me—particularly the disguises.

Margaret. Even you would never recognize me if——

Gilbert. If what?

Margaret. If it weren't that one of the last chapters contains our entire correspondence.

Gilbert. What?

Margaret. Yes, all the letters I wrote you—and yours to me—are in the book.

Gilbert. Pardon me, but how did you get your letters to me? *I* have them.

Margaret. I made a draft of each before I wrote it out.

Gilbert. You did?

Margaret. Yes.

Gilbert. A draft of each—of these notes penned apparently in trembling haste! "Just a line, belovèd, before I go to rest—my eyes are closing——" And then when your eyes did close, you copied it out to send me!

Margaret. Why should you complain?

Gilbert. I might have known it! I ought to be thankful she didn't copy them from a "Letter Writer for Lovers." Oh, how my castle is falling—the past is but a loathsome heap of ruins—she made a draft of her letters!

Margaret. Cheer up! These letters of mine may be all that is known of you, some years hence.

Gilbert. And besides which, that puts us in a nice position.

Margaret. How?

Gilbert (*touching his book*). They're in here, too.

Margaret. What's in where?

Gilbert. Here in my novel.

Margaret. *What* is in your novel?

Gilbert. Our letters, yours and mine.

Margaret. And how did you get your own? *I* have them. Ah ha! you made a draft, too.

Gilbert. Oh, no, I copied them for myself before I sent them off. They were too good to lose. There are some here that you never received. They were much too fine for you—you never would have understood them.

Margaret. Yes, but—for pity's sake, if that is so—— (*She turns the leaves of the book hastily*) Yes, here they are. Why—this is just—just as if we proclaimed aloud to the whole world that we two—Great Heavens! Is that letter here, too, the one you sent me, the morning after the first night——

Gilbert. Of course. That one was superb!

Margaret. Oh, this is dreadful—dreadful! It will be a European scandal. And Clemens! For God's sake, Clemens! I begin to hope he will not return. I am lost—and so are you. Wherever you may hide yourself he will find you and he will shoot you down like a mad dog.

Gilbert (*putting his book in his pocket*). What a hackneyed comparison!

Margaret. What ever put this crazy idea into your head? To publish the letters of the woman you pretended to love? It proves that you are no gentleman.

Gilbert. Delicious! you've done the very same thing yourself.

Margaret. I am a woman.

Gilbert. Ah, now you can remember that fact.

Margaret. Yes, it's true—I have nothing to reproach you with—we are worthy of one another. Clemens is right. We are worse than the women who show themselves in tights at Ronacher's. We lay bare our souls to the public gaze, we expose shamelessly all our most intimate happiness, all our secret griefs! oh, shame on us! Clemens will be quite right if he does turn me out. (*Suddenly*) Come, Amandus.

Gilbert. What is it now?

Margaret. I accept your suggestion.

Gilbert. What suggestion?

Margaret. I will flee with you. (*She runs about looking for her coat and hat*)

Gilbert. What an idea! What are you about now?

Margaret (*pinning on her hat, scrambling into her coat in great excitement*). It can all be as before—you said so yourself—it needn't be the Isar—any river will do. There! I'm ready now.

Gilbert. This is absolute madness. Where could we flee to? Didn't you just say he would find me anywhere? If you're with me he'd find you, too. It would be much wiser for each of us to go alone.

Margaret. Wretch! Would you desert me now? And you were at my feet a moment ago—aren't you ashamed of yourself?

Gilbert. Why should I be? I am a nervous sick man, full of moods. (MARGARET *has run to the window, now screams*) What's the matter now? What will the General's widow think of me?

Margaret. It's Clemens! He's coming here.

Gilbert. Then—perhaps—— (*He turns to the door*)

Margaret. You're going?

Gilbert. I did not come to call on the Baron.

Margaret. He will meet you on the stairs, that will be worse. You must stay. I will not be the only victim.

Gilbert. Don't be so idiotic. What are you afraid of? He can't possibly have read both books since he left here. Do come to your senses. Take off that hat—put your coat away. (*He helps her out of her coat and hat*) If he sees you like this, he'd surely suspect something.

Margaret. I don't care. I want to get it over with, the sooner the better. I can't endure the suspense. I shall tell him everything.

Gilbert. Everything?

Margaret. Yes, and while you are here, too. If I confess all he may forgive me.

Gilbert. And how about me? I have something better to do than to stay here and be shot down like a mad dog by a jealous Baron. (*Bell rings outside*)

Margaret. There he is—there he is.

Gilbert. You shall not say a word.

Margaret. I will—I will tell everything.

Gilbert. Very well, then, in that case I shall sell my life dearly.

Margaret. What will you do?

Gilbert. I will fling a few truths in his face—truths no Baron has ever heard before. (CLEMENS *enters. When he sees them, he is constrained, very cool and polite*)

Clemens. Ah! Mr. Gilbert, is it not?

Gilbert. It is, Baron. I am on my way South and could not resist this opportunity to pay my respects to an old friend.

Clemens. I see. (*There is a pause*) But I seem to have interrupted your conversation. I am sorry for that. Please don't let me disturb you.

Gilbert. Let me see, what were we talking about?

Clemens. Maybe I can help you there. In Munich, at least, it was usually your books we were talking about.

Gilbert. Ah, excellent—and I believe we *were* speaking of my latest novel just as you came in.

Clemens. Please continue. You can talk about literature to me now, can't he, Margaret? Is it a realistic novel? Or symbolic? Something from your own experience or merely conventionalized?

Gilbert. In a certain sense all that one writes must have been experienced.

Clemens. Indeed? That is most interesting.

Gilbert. To paint a Nero it is necessary that one should have fired Rome, mentally, at least.

Clemens. Of course.

Gilbert. And where should we find inspiration, if not within ourselves? Where find our models if not in the life around us? (MARGARET *grows more and more uneasy*)

Clemens. The trouble is that the models themselves are so seldom consulted about it. I must say, if I were a woman I'd protest against having everybody told that

I—— (*Sharply*) In decent society we call that compromising a woman.

Gilbert. I don't know whether I may class myself as belonging to decent society, but I call it ennobling a woman.

Clemens. Oh!

Gilbert. The essential fact is that the thing must be well done. What can it matter, in the higher sense, if one does know that a woman has been happy in the arms of this man or that?

Clemens. Mr. Gilbert, I call your attention to the fact that you are speaking in the presence of a lady.

Gilbert. I am speaking in the presence of a good comrade, whose opinions on such matters are likely to coincide with my own.

Clemens. Indeed?

Margaret (*runs to* CLEMENS *and falls at his feet*). Clemens—Clemens!

Clemens (*dumfounded*). Why, Margaret!

Margaret. Forgive me, Clemens!

Clemens. But Margaret—— (*To* GILBERT) Mr. Gilbert, this is most painful—— Margaret, do stand up —it's all right. (MARGARET, *still on her knees, clasps her hands and gazes up at him*) Yes, yes, it's all right—do get up. (*She rises*) It's all settled I tell you—you have only to telephone to Kunigel. I have made all arrangements. The plates will be destroyed—is that right?

Gilbert. May I ask—is it the new novel that's to be destroyed?

Clemens. Then you know? I fear, Mr. Gilbert, you were somewhat mistaken as to that comradeship.

Gilbert. Yes. There's nothing more for me to do than to ask a general pardon. I am quite crushed.

Clemens. I regret that you should have been obliged to witness a scene so—I had almost said—so conjugal.

Gilbert. Oh, I shall not disturb you any longer. And before I go, Baron, may I take the liberty—as a slight token of my esteem and as a sign that all misunderstand-

ing between us is now over,—may I hand you a copy of my latest novel?

Clemens. You are very kind. I must confess German novels are not in my line, but yours shall be the last I read—no, the last but one.

Margaret and Gilbert (*together*). The last but one?

Clemens. Yes.

Margaret. And the very last?

Clemens. Yours, my dear. (*He takes a book from his pocket*) I asked for one copy to bring home to you, to both of us. (MARGARET *and* GILBERT *exchange glances of consternation*)

Margaret. How good you are. (*Takes the book*) Yes, this is it——

Clemens. We will read it together.

Margaret (*with sudden decision*). No, Clemens—no, I cannot accept such kindness. (*With a fine gesture she throws the book into the fire*) There! All that part of my life is over and done with forever.

Gilbert (*delighted*). Margaret!

Clemens. Margaret! What have you done?

Margaret (*stands before the fire until she sees that the book is burning, then she throws herself into his arms*). Can you doubt now that I love you?

Gilbert (*greatly pleased*). I don't seem to be at all necessary here. (*Bowing, as he goes toward the door*) Madame!—Baron!—— (*To himself, as he turns to go*) But oh! if I could have used that closing scene! (*He goes out*)

CURTAIN

THE GREEN COCKATOO

GROTESQUERY IN ONE ACT BY

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

Englished by Grace Isabel Colbron

THE GREEN COCKATOO

CHARACTERS

EMILE, Duke de Cadignan
FRANCOIS, Vicomte de Nogeant
ALBIN, Chevalier de la Tremouille
MARQUIS DE LANSAC
SÉVERINE, his wife
ROLLIN, Poet
PROSPÈRE, host of the "Green Cockatoo," formerly manager of a theatre

HENRI BALTHASAR GUILLAUME SCAEVOLA JULES ETIENNE MAURICE GEORGETTE MICHETTE FLIPOTTE	Prospère's troupe

LÉOCADIE, actress, Henri's wife
GRASSET, philosopher
LEBRÊT, tailor
GRAIN, a tramp
A POLICE SERGEANT
ARISTOCRATS, ACTORS and ACTRESSES; CITIZENS of Paris

The action takes place in Paris on the evening of July 14th, 1789, in Prospère's wine-room, "The Green Cockatoo."

THE GREEN COCKATOO

Wine-room of the "Green Cockatoo."

A cellar room of moderate size into which seven steps lead down from a door at the right, well to the rear. There is another door in the back wall at the left, scarcely visible. About all the available space in the room is filled by plain wooden tables and chairs. The bar is in the center of the left wall, behind it are casks of wine fitted with bung-pipes. The room is lit by small hanging lamps.

PROSPÈRE *is behind the bar,* GRASSET *and* LEBRÊT *enter.*

Grasset (still on the steps). This way, Lebrêt. I know this source. My old friend and former manager always has a cask of wine hidden somewhere hereabouts when all Paris else is athirst.

Prospère. Good evening, Grasset—showing yourself here again? At odds with philosophy, eh? Have you a wish to take engagement with me again?

Grasset. In a manner, yes—I want wine. I am the guest, you the host.

Prospère. Wine, indeed? And where should I get wine, Grasset? They plundered all the wine shops of Paris last night—and I wager you had a hand in it.

Grasset. Bring wine, I say. For the rabble that will be here in an hour—(*He listens as if to some sound outside*)—do you hear anything, Lebrêt?

Lebrêt. It is like distant thunder.

Grasset. Well done, citizens of Paris! (*To* PROSPÈRE) You surely have a cask in hiding for the rabble you expect later. Bring it out now. My friend and admirer here, citizen Lebrêt, tailor of the Rue St. Honoré, will pay for all we drink.

Lebrêt. Yes, yes, I will pay. (PROSPÈRE *hesitates*)

Grasset. Show him that you have money, Lebrêt. (LEBRÊT *takes out a well-filled purse*)

Prospère. Well, I will see if—— (*He fills two glasses from one of the casks*) Where have you been, Grasset? At the Palais Royal?

Grasset. Yes, and I made a speech there, too. It is my turn now, friend Prospère. And do you know whom I followed with my speech?

Prospère. Well?

Grasset. Camille Desmoulins! Yes, I dared it! And tell me, Lebrêt, which of us had the greater applause, Desmoulins or I?

Lebrêt. You did, beyond a doubt.

Grasset. And how did I bear myself?

Lebrêt. Magnificently.

Grasset. Do you hear that, Prospère? I stood on the table—I looked like some great monument—yes, I did. And all the thousand, the five thousand, the ten thousand, gathered around me just as they had gathered around Camille Desmoulins, and called to me, and cheered me——

Lebrêt. They cheered louder for you.

Grasset. Yes—not much, but still it was louder—and now they are storming the Bastille—and I may say they have followed my call—before the evening is out we will have taken it.

Prospère. Maybe—if the walls could fall before your speeches.

Grasset. Speeches? Have you no ears? They're shooting now. Our valiant soldiers are with us—they have the same hellish hatred for that accursed prison that we have—they know it is their fathers and their brothers who are behind those walls—but they would not shoot had they not heard us talk. Yes, my dear Prospère, great is the power of the intellect. (*To* LEBRÊT) Where are the papers?

Lebrêt. Here they are. (*He draws a handful of pamphlets from his pocket*)

Grasset. Here are the newest pamphlets given out in

the Palais Royal. Here is one by my friend Cerutti, "A Record for the French People;" here one by Desmoulins —he speaks better than he writes—"Free France"——

Prospère. And where will yours appear, that you're always telling me about?

Grasset. We need no more words, the time for deeds has come. A coward, who sits within his four walls today,—a man's place is in the streets.

Lebrêt. Bravo! Bravo!

Grasset. They've killed their Mayor in Toulon; they've plundered a dozen houses in Brignolles; we Parisians are the stupid dolts who endure everything——

Prospère. They can hardly say that of us now.

Lebrêt (*has been drinking steadily*). Arise!—citizens —arise!

Grasset. To arms!—shut up your place and come with us.

Prospère. I will come, at the proper time.

Grasset. When there's no longer any danger?

Prospère. I am as great a lover of Freedom as you are, friend—but I have my business.

Grasset. There is but one business for citizens of Paris today—and that is to set their brothers free.

Prospère. For those who have nothing else to do, you mean.

Lebrêt. What's that? He's mocking us?

Prospère. No such intention. But see that you take yourselves off now. My performance will begin shortly, and I have no use for you then.

Lebrêt. A performance? Is this a theatre?

Prospère. It is. Your friend here played with us not two weeks ago.

Lebrêt. You played here, Grasset? Do you let the rascal make game of you unpunished?

Grasset. Calm yourself—it is true. I did play here. This is no ordinary wine-room, it is a den of thieves— come now.

Prospère. Payment first, please.

Lebrêt. If this is a den of thieves, I sha'n't pay a sou.

Prospère. Tell your friend where he is.

Grasset. This is a strange place. There are people here who play the criminal—and others who are criminals without knowing it.

Lebrêt. Indeed!

Grasset. I would like you to notice that what I have just said was extremely brilliant. It would make the success of an entire speech.

Lebrêt. But I don't understand a word of it all.

Grasset. I told you that Prospère was my former manager. He is still acting here with his troupe, but not in the usual way. My former colleagues sit round here and pretend to be criminals. Do you understand? They tell hair-raising stories that never happened—they speak of awful deeds which they never committed—and the audience that assembles to hear them enjoys the sensation of sitting in the same room with the most dangerous scum of Paris—with swindlers, thieves, and murderers.

Lebrêt. What sort of an audience is it?

Prospère. The most fashionable people of Paris——

Grasset. Noblemen——

Prospère. Gentlemen of the Court——

Lebrêt. Down with them!

Grasset. This is something to their taste—this whips up their jaded senses. Yes—this is where I began, Lebrêt, this is where I made my first speech, in pretended jest—and this is where I began to hate the dogs as they sat here with us—with their fine clothes, their perfumes, their rottenness. And I am well pleased, my good Lebrêt, that you should see the place from whence your great friend went forth to larger things—— (*In a changed tone*) Say, Prospère, if there should be any slip——

Prospère. Slip? How?

Grasset. In my political career—would you engage me again?

Prospère. Not at any price.

Grasset (*easily*). Why not? Don't you think there could be a chance for anyone beside your belovèd Henri?

Prospère. Apart from that—I'd be afraid you would

forget yourself some day and really attack one of my paying customers——

Grasset (*flattered*). That might be possible——

Prospère. I—I can control myself.

Grasset. Of a truth, Prospère, I could admire your self-control—did I not happen to know that you are a coward.

Prospère. My dear friend, I am satisfied with my own way of doing things. I find sufficient pleasure in telling them my true opinion of them, to their very faces—in reviling them to my heart's desire—while they look upon it as a joke. That, too, is a way of relieving one's feelings. (*He draws a dagger and turns it to catch the light*)

Lebrêt. What does this mean, Citizen Prospère?

Grasset. Don't be afraid, I wager the dagger is not even sharpened.

Prospère. You might lose your wager, friend. The day will come when the joke turns to bitter earnest—and I am ready for it.

Grasset. That day is near! It is a great age we live in. Come, citizen Lebrêt, we must join the others. Farewell, Prospère—you will see me as one of the great ones—or never again!

Lebrêt (*staggering*). As one of the great—or—never. (*They both go out*)

Prospère (*seats himself on a table, reads from one of the pamphlets*). "The beast is in the noose, strangle it." Not bad, little Desmoulins. "Never was richer booty for a conqueror—forty thousand palaces and castles, two-fifths of all the wealth in France, will be the reward of bravery—those who think themselves the conquerors will be overthrown, and the nation will be purged."

(*The* POLICE SERGEANT *enters*)

Prospère (*measures him*). The rabble is appearing in good season tonight.

Sergeant. Spare your jokes, friend Prospère. I am the Police Sergeant for your district.

Prospère. And what can I do for you?

Sergeant. I have been ordered to attend this evening's performance in your place here.

Prospère. I am greatly honored.

Sergeant. That's not the point, good Prospère. The authorities wish to know just exactly what happens here. For some weeks——

Prospère. It is a pleasure resort, Sergeant, nothing more.

Sergeant. Let me talk, please. For some weeks, so they say, this place has been the scene of vile orgies.

Prospère. The rumor is false, Sergeant. Jokes, harmless jokes, that is all.

Sergeant. That's the way it begins, I know. But it ends very differently, my report says—you were an actor?

Prospère. A manager, Sergeant. Manager of an excellent troupe which played last in St. Denis.

Sergeant. That is immaterial. (*He reads from a note-book*) You inherited some money——

Prospère. Hardly worth mentioning.

Sergeant. Your ensemble scattered?

Prospère. So did the money.

Sergeant. Very good. (*Both smile, then seriously again*) You opened this wine-room?

Prospère. Which paid very badly.

Sergeant (*still reading*). Then you hit upon an idea to which a certain originality cannot be denied.

Prospère. You flatter me, Sergeant.

Sergeant. You collected your troupe again, and let them give a performance, which has been characterized as peculiar—and somewhat doubtful.

Prospère. If it were at all doubtful, Sergeant, I should not have my audience—I may say—the most aristocratic audience in Paris. The Vicomte de Nogeant is my daily guest. The Marquis de Lansac comes very frequently, and the Duke de Cadignan, Sergeant, is the most ardent admirer of my leading actor, the celebrated Henri Baston.

Sergeant. And an admirer also of the art—or the arts—of your actresses?

Prospère. If you could see my little actresses, Sergeant, you would not blame anyone for admiring them.

Sergeant. Enough of this. It has been reported to the authorities that the amusement offered by your—what shall I say?

Prospère. The word "artists" might suffice.

Sergeant. I shall use the word "hirelings"—the amusement offered by your hirelings goes beyond the bounds of the permissable. The report says that there are speeches made by—what shall I say? by your artificial criminals which—what does the report say?—(*He reads from his notebook*)—which are not only immoral—that would not trouble us—but which are most seditious and liable to do harm—this cannot be a matter of indifference to the authorities, particularly not in such troublous times.

Prospère. My dear Sergeant, my only answer to all this is a polite invitation to visit the performance. You will soon discover that there is nothing seditious going on—mainly because my audience would not be susceptible to sedition. We give a theatrical performance, that is all.

Sergeant. I am not allowed to accept your invitation, but I shall remain here in my official capacity.

Prospère. I can promise you a very pleasant evening. But if you permit a word of advice, I would recommend that you exchange your official uniform for civilian clothes. The spontaneity of my artists—and the mood of my audience, would both suffer from the presence of a police official in uniform.

Sergeant. You are right, M. Prospère. I will disappear for a short time and return as a young gentleman of fashion.

Prospère. That will be easy for you, Sergeant. And you are equally welcome as a vagabond—that would not attract attention here—only not as police official.

Sergeant. Good evening, then. (*He goes towards door*)

Prospère (*bowing*). When will that blessed day dawn, when you and your like—— (*The* SERGEANT

meets GRAIN *in the doorway.* GRAIN, *who is ragged and dirty, starts when he sees the* SERGEANT. *The* SERGEANT *looks at him sharply, then smiles and turns to* PROSPÈRE)

Sergeant. One of your artists already? (*He goes out*)

Grain (*comes down, whining*). Good evening.

Prospère (*when he has looked him over sharply*). If you *are* one of my actors I must compliment you—for I do not recognize you.

Grain. What did you say?

Prospère. Stop this nonsense and take off your wig. I want to know who you are. (*He pulls at* GRAIN'S *hair*)

Grain. Ouch!——

Prospère. The devil—that is real hair—who are you? You seem to be a genuine tramp.

Grain. I am.

Prospère. Then what do you want of me?

Grain. Have I the honor of addressing Citizen Prospère?—host of the "Green Cockatoo?"

Prospère. I am he.

Grain. Grain is my name—or sometimes Carniche—and they sometimes call me the "Bellowing Brimstone:"—but they imprisoned me under the name of Grain, Citizen Prospère, and that's the main point.

Prospère. Oh, I understand. You want an engagement here and are showing me what you can do. Good—continue.

Grain. Citizen Prospère, pray don't think me a swindler. I am a man of honor. When I tell you that I have been in prison, I am telling you the truth. (PROSPÈRE *looks at him suspiciously and* GRAIN *takes a paper from his pocket*) Citizen Prospère, look at this. It will tell you that I was released yesterday afternoon at four o'clock.

Prospère (*reading the paper*). After an imprisonment of two years—why, this is—genuine.

Grain. Did you still doubt it, Citizen Prospère?

Prospère. But what did you do, to be imprisoned two years?

Grain. They would have hanged me—but fortunately I was still half a child when I murdered my poor aunt——

Prospère. Man! Why did you murder your aunt?

Grain. I should not have done it, Citizen Prospère, had she not been false to me, and with my best friend, too——

Prospère. Your aunt?

Grain. Yes. She was more to me than aunts usually are to their nephews. Our family relationships were peculiar. I was embittered—deeply embittered. Shall I tell you about it?

Prospère. Yes, do. We may be able to come to an agreement.

Grain. My sister was still half a child when she ran away—and with whom do you think?

Prospère. I could not possibly guess.

Grain. With her uncle. Then he deserted her, left her with a child.

Prospère. A whole child—I hope.

Grain. Citizen Prospère—it is indelicate of you to joke on such subjects.

Prospère. Listen to me, you Bellowing Brimstone—these family affairs of yours bore me. Do you think I am here to listen to every chance vagabond's story of his murders? I suppose you want something of me?

Grain. I do, Citizen Prospère. I come to ask for work.

Prospère (*scornfully*). I call your attention to the fact that this is a pleasure resort—there are no aunts to murder here.

Grain. One such experience is enough for me, thank you. I wish to become an honest man. I have been sent to you——

Prospère. By whom?

Grain. By a most amiable young man whom they put into my cell three days ago. Now he is alone there—Gaston is his name—you know him.

Prospère. Gaston? That explains why I haven't seen him the last three evenings. He is one of my best men

for pickpockets—he can tell stories—the audience shook with laughter.

Grain. Yes—but now they have caught him.

Prospère. Caught him? He didn't really steal?

Grain. Yes, he did. But it must have been the first time, for he seems to have been incredibly clumsy at it. Just imagine—(*Confidentially*)—he puts his hand in a lady's pocket on the Boulevarde des Capucines—and just pulled out her purse—like a real amateur. You inspire confidence, Citizen Prospère, so I'll confess to you there was a time when I would do that sort of little trick myself—but never without my dear father. Ah—while I was still a child—when we were all together—when my poor aunt was still alive——

Prospère. Stop that sniveling, it is very bad taste. Didn't you kill her yourself?

Grain. Alas, too late. But as I was going to say—take me into your service. I wish to reverse Gaston's method. He acted the criminal and then became one in earnest—I——

Prospère. I'll try you, your appearance will help you considerably. At the proper moment you can tell about your aunt—just as it happened—some one will start you off with a question.

Grain. I thank you, Citizen Prospère—and as for my salary——

Prospère. You play on trial tonight, I cannot pay you for that. You will have plenty to eat and drink, and a few francs for a night's lodging, if you need it.

Grain. I thank you. You can introduce me to the other players as a guest from the province.

Prospère. No, we'd better tell them at once that you are a real murderer—they will like that better.

Grain. Pardon me, I don't want to say anything to my own discredit—I can't quite understand——

Prospère. When you have been on the stage a little longer you *will* understand.

(SCAEVOLA *and* JULES *enter*)

Scaevola. Good evening, most genial Manager.

Prospère. Mine host, please. How often must I tell you that you spoil the whole effect if you call me manager?

Scaevola. Well, whatever you are—I don't believe we'll play tonight.

Prospère. Why not?

Scaevola. People won't be in the mood for it—there's a hellish noise in the streets and the mob before the Bastille are screaming like mad devils.

Prospère. What does that matter to us? We have had the noise now for months and our audience has never failed us. They enjoy themselves just the same.

Scaevola. Yes, with the enjoyment of people about to be hanged.

Prospère. If I could only live to see it!

Scaevola. But meanwhile give us something to drink, to put me in the right mood. I don't feel at all inspired to-night.

Prospère. That happens to you frequently, friend. Let me tell you that I wasn't at all satisfied with you yesterday.

Scaevola. May I ask why not?

Prospère. Your story of the house robbery was simply silly.

Scaevola. Silly?

Prospère. Yes, silly and quite unconvincing. You can't get your effect by mere yelling.

Scaevola. I never yell.

Prospère. You always yell. I see I must rehearse these things with you. I cannot depend upon your own ideas. Henri is the only one——

Scaevola. Henri! Always Henri! Henri is a ranter. My robbery yesterday was a masterpiece, Henri couldn't do it in a life-time. If you are not satisfied with me, friend Prospère, I shall go to some respectable theatre. (*Sees* GRAIN) Who is this. He's not one of us. Are you engaging new people. What sort of a make-up does he call that?

Prospère. Don't be alarmed, he is not a professional. He is a real murderer.

Scaevola. Oh, I see. (*He goes to* GRAIN) Delighted to make your acquaintance. My name is Scaevola.

Grain. Thank you. They call me Grain. (JULES *has been walking up and down all this time, halting occasionally, like a man suffering from strong emotion*)

Prospère. What's the matter with you, Jules?

Jules. I'm studying.

Prospère. Studying what?

Jules. Pangs of conscience. I'll show you a conscience-stricken sinner tonight. Look at me—how do you like the furrow in my brow? Do I not look as if all the furies of hell were pursuing me? (*He rages up and down*)

Scaevola (*roars*). Wine, bring wine!

Prospère. Keep cool, the audience hasn't arrived yet——

(HENRI *and* LÉOCADIE *come in*)

Henri (*to* PROSPÈRE). Good evening. (*With a light gesture towards the others*) Good evening, gentlemen.

Prospère. Good evening, Henri. But what's this I see? You're with Léocadie?

Grain (*has been looking attentively at* LÉOCADIE, *speaks aside to* SCAEVOLA) Why, I know her. (*Speaks further with him*)

Léocadie. Yes, dear Prospère, it is I.

Prospère. I haven't seen you for a whole year. Permit me. (*Is about to kiss her*)

Henri. None of that, please. (*His eyes rest on her with pride and passion, but with a certain anxiety*)

Prospère. Why, Henri, old friends like us! And your former manager, Léocadie!

Léocadie. Ah, those were pleasant days, Prospère.

Prospère. Why do you sigh? You've made your career—of course, it's easier for a beautiful young woman——

Henri (*angrily*). I will not hear it.

Prospère. You needn't scream at me so, just because you happen to be with her again.

Henri. Stop that talk—she is my wife—since yesterday——

Prospère. Your wife? (*To* LÉOCADIE) Is he joking?

Léocadie. No, he has really married me.

Prospère. My congratulations. Scaevola, Jules, Henri is married.

Scaevola (*comes forward*). Congratulations! (*Winks at* LÉOCADIE. JULES *shakes hands with both*)

Grain (*comes forward, speaks to* PROSPÈRE). Strange —I saw this woman—just a few moments after they had let me out.

Prospère. How is that?

Grain. It was the first beautiful woman I had seen for two years. I was greatly moved—but there was another man with her—— (*Talks to* PROSPÈRE)

Henri (*in a high-pitched tone of ecstacy, which must not be declamatory*). Léocadie, my belovèd—my wife—all that has been is no more—a moment like this wipes out all the past. (SCAEVOLA *and* JULES *drop back.* PROSPÈRE *comes forward to* HENRI)

Prospère. What moment?

Henri. A holy sacrament unites us now—that is more—far more, than mere human vows. God now watches over us—we can forget all that has gone before. A new life begins for us, Léocadie—our love is sacred, our kisses, however wild they may be, are holy now. Léocadie, my belovèd, my wife. (*With a passionate glance.*) Is she not different now, Prospère? is not her glance clearer, her brow more pure? all that was, is wiped out—is it not so, my Léocadie?

Léocadie. Certainly, Henri.

Henri. And all is well with us. We leave Paris to-morrow. Léocadie appears to-night for the last time at the Porte St. Martin and this is my last evening with you.

Prospère (*startled*). Are you crazy, Henri! You want to leave me?—The manager of the Porte St. Martin

won't think of letting Léocadie go? She is his greatest success—the men flock to see her, they say.

Henri. Be quiet! Léocadie goes with me—she will never leave me. Tell me you will never leave me, Léocadie? (*Brutally*) Tell me——

Léocadie. I will never leave you, Henri.

Henri. If you did, I would—— (*Pause*) I am weary of this life, I want rest—peace.

Prospère. But what will you do with yourself, Henri? It is absurd. Listen. I have a suggestion to make. Take Léocadie away from the Porte St. Martin, if you want to, but let her stay here with me. I'll engage her. I lack a clever actress anyway.

Henri. My decision is made, Prospère; we leave the city—we go out into the country.

Prospère. Into the country? Where?

Henri. To my old father, who lives all alone in his poor village—my father, whom I have not seen for seven years. He had scarcely hoped to see his lost son again—he will welcome me with joy.

Prospère. And what will you do there? The people are starving in the country. They're worse off even than in Paris here. What will you do with yourself there? You are not the man to till the fields—don't delude yourself into thinking you are.

Henri. I will prove that I am.

Prospère. There'll soon be no more grain growing in all France—you go to certain misery.

Henri. To certain happiness, Prospère—is it not so, Léocadie? We've dreamed of it often—ah—I long for the peace of the great open stretches—yes, Prospère, in my dreams I see myself walking with her evenings across the fields, in an endless quiet—under a marvellously soothing sky. We will flee this horrible, this dangerous city; and a great peace will come over us.—Have we not often dreamed of it, my Léocadie?

Léocadie. Yes, we have often dreamed of it.

Prospère. Listen, Henri, think it over. I will raise your salary gladly, and I will give Léocadie just as much as I give you.

Léocadie. Oh Henri, do you hear that?

Prospère. I don't know of anyone who can take your place here. None of my people have such clever ideas as you do, and not one of them is as popular with our audience—don't leave me.

Henri. I can easily believe that you'll not find anyone to take my place.

Prospère. Stay here, Henri. (*He looks meaningly at* LÉOCADIE *and she answers with a glance that intimates she will arrange it*)

Henri. The parting will be hard, I promise you—for the others, not for me. I have prepared something for my last appearance to-day—something that will make them all shudder—they will feel the breath of coming annihilation, of the end of their world—for the end of their world is near. I shall not be here to see it. They will tell us of it out there, Léocadie, many days later.—But they will shudder to-night I promise you. And you yourself, Prospère, you will say that Henri never played so well before.

Prospère. What will you play? Do you know, Léocadie?

Léocadie. He never tells me anything.

Henri. Does anyone realize what an artist I am?

Prospère. We do, of course we do. And that is why I say you should not bury a talent like yours in the country—you wrong yourself, you wrong the cause of art—

Henri. What do I care for art? I want peace, rest. You cannot understand it, Prospère; you have never loved——

Prospère. Oh——

Henri. As I love. I want to be alone with her—thus only Léocadie, can we forget it all. And we shall be happy—happier than ever mortals before us. We will have children. You will be a good mother, Léocadie—and a good wife—all else—all, will be wiped out forever—— (*There is a long pause*)

Léocadie. It is growing late, Henri, I must be at the theatre. Goodbye, Prospère. I am glad I've finally seen

this celebrated place of yours where Henri scores such triumphs.

Prospère. Why have you never been here before?

Léocadie. Henri did not wish it—he does not want me to sit about with the men, you know.

Henri (*goes back*). Let me have a taste of that, Scaevola. (*He drinks*)

Prospère (*alone with* LÉOCADIE). (*Aside to her*) Henri is a fool—you have done worse things than that.

Léocadie. No remarks, please.

Prospère. I warn you, you Canaille, have a care—he will kill you some day.

Léocadie. What's the matter now?

Prospère. You were seen with one of your fellows, only yesterday.

Léocadie. Idiot, do you know who that was——?

Henri (*turns suddenly*). What are you saying to her? No whispering, please—no secrets from me—she is my wife now.

Prospère. What did you give her for a wedding present?

Léocadie. Oh, he never thinks of such things.

Henri. You shall have your present to-day.

Léocadie. What?

Scaevola and Jules. What are you going to give her?

Henri (*absolutely serious*). When your scene is out, you may come here to see me act. (*The others laugh*) No woman ever had a more costly present. Come now, Léocadie. Au revoir, Prospère; I will be back shortly.

(HENRI *and* LÉOCADIE *go out.* FRANCOIS, VICOMTE DE NOGEANT *and* ALBIN, CHEVALIER DE LA TREMOUILLE, *come in together*)

Scaevola. What a contemptible braggart!

Prospère (*to the newcomers*). Good evening, pigs. (ALBIN *starts*)

François (*pays no attention*). Was not that little Léocadie of the Porte St. Martin, who went out there with Henri?

Prospère. Surely it was. I suppose she could make even you remember that you're something of a man, if she tried hard, eh?

François (*laughing*). Possibly. We are early, it seems.

Prospère. You can amuse yourself with your minion, for a time. (ALBIN *starts angrily*)

François. Don't do that—I told you what it was like here. Bring us wine.

Prospère. I will. But the time will come when you will be glad to get water from the Seine.

François. Possibly. However, I want wine to-day, and of the best.

(PROSPÈRE *goes to the bar*)

Albin. What a dreadful man!

François. It is all a joke, I tell you. But there are places where you might hear such things said in earnest.

Albin. Is it not forbidden?

François (*laughs*). It's easy to see you are fresh from the province.

Albin. It's nearly as bad down our way these days; the peasants are becoming alarmingly insolent. We hardly know what to do about it.

François. The poor devils are hungry, that's the whole secret.

Albin. But how can I help that? Or my great-uncle either?

François. Why your great-uncle?

Albin. They held a meeting in our village and they called my great-uncle, the Count de Tremouille, a grain usurer—just imagine.

François. Was that all?

Albin. Well, I must say——

François. We will go to the Palais Royal to-morrow, and you'll hear some speeches that will surprise you. But we let them talk—it is safest. They are good souls at bottom; it is wisest to let them vent their feelings this way.

Albin (*looking at* SCAEVOLA *and* JULES). What suspicious-looking fellows—how they stare at us. (*He puts his hand to the sword*)

François (*seizes* ALBIN'S *hand*). Don't be a fool. (*To the actors*) You needn't begin until more audience comes in. (*To* ALBIN) Those are the actors, the most respectable people imaginable. I warrant you, you have sat at table with far worse rogues.

Albin. But they were better dressed.

(PROSPÈRE *brings them the wine.* MICHETTE *and* FLIPOTTE *come in*)

François. Good evening, children, come here to us.

Michette. Here we are—come on Flipotte. She's still so shy.

Flipotte. Good evening, young gentleman.

Albin. Good evening, ladies.

Michette. What a dear boy! (*She seats herself on his knee*)

Albin. Please explain, François, are these respectable women?

Michette. What's that he says?

François. The women who come here? Don't be so absurd, Albin.

Prospère. What do the Duchesses command?

Michette. Sweet wine for me.

François (*pointing to* FLIPOTTE). Your friend?

Michette. We live together, and we haven't but one bed between us.

Flipotte (*with a blush*). Will you find that inconvenient when you come to see her? (*She seats herself on* FRANCOIS' *knee*)

Albin. I should not call her very shy.

Scaevola (*rises, comes to table, speaks with gloomy mien*). Have I found you at last? (*To* ALBIN) Miserable seducer, she is mine—— (PROSPÈRE *watches him*)

François (*to* ALBIN). A joke, I tell you.

Albin. She is not his?

Michette. I shall sit where it pleases me. (SCAEVOLA *stands still with clenched fist*)

Prospère (*behind him*). Well?

Scaevola. Ha! Ha!

Prospère (*takes him by the collar, speaks aside to him*). Is that all you can do? You haven't a sou's worth of talent. You can't do anything but yell.

Michette (*to* FRANCOIS). He was much better the other evening.

Scaevola (*to* PROSPÈRE). I'm not in the mood yet. I'll do it better when there are more people present. I need an audience.

(*Enter the* DUKE DE CADIGNAN)

Duke. In full blast already? (MICHETTE *and* FLIPOTTE *run to him*)

Michette. My sweet Duke!

François. Good evening, Emile. (*Introducing*) My young friend Albin, Chevalier de la Tremouille—Duke de Cadignan.

Duke. I am charmed to meet you. (*To the girls who cling to him*) Not so close, girls. (*To* ALBIN) You've come to have a look at this queer wine-room?

Albin. It quite dazes me.

François. The Chevalier has only just come to Paris.

Duke (*laughing*). You have chosen a good time to come.

Albin. Why?

Michette. He's using another delicious perfume! There isn't a man in Paris smells so sweet.

Duke. She is thinking of the seven or eight hundred others whom she knows as well as she knows me.

Flipotte. May I play with your sword? (*She draws out his sword and lets it sparkle in the light*)

Grain (*aside to* PROSPÈRE). That was the man—the man who was with her. (*He talks further to him, and* PROSPÈRE *seems surprised*)

Duke. Henri not here yet? (*To* ALBIN) When you see Henri you will not regret coming here.

Prospère (*to the Duke*). So you are here again? Charmed—but I sha'n't have that pleasure long.

Duke. Why not? I rather like it here.

Prospère. I believe that. But you are likely to be one of the first to go——

Albin. What does he mean?

Prospère. He understands—the most fortunate will be the first to fall. (*He goes back to the bar*)

Duke (*after a moment's thought*). If I were king I would make that man my Court Jester—that is, I would have many jesters, but he should be one of them.

Albin. What did he mean? That you were too fortunate?

Duke. Chevalier, he means——

Albin. Oh pray do not call me Chevalier, they all call me Albin. Because I look so young, you know.

Duke (*smiling*). Gladly. But you must call me Emile.

Albin. If you permit it, Emile.

Duke. These people grow alarmingly witty.

François. Why alarming? It reassures me—— As long as the mob is in a mood for jesting, nothing serious can happen.

Duke. The jests are passing strange, sometimes. I have just heard of something that set me thinking.

François. Tell us about it.

Michette and Flipotte. Yes, tell us, sweet Duke.

Duke. Do you know Lelange?

François. The village? Why yes, the Marquis de Montserrat has one of his finest hunting preserves there.

Duke. Quite right. My brother is with him at his castle, and he wrote me of this affair. They have a Mayor in Lelange who is very unpopular.

François. Can you name one who is not unpopular now?

Duke. But listen—the women of the village marched to the Mayor's house, carrying a coffin.

Flipotte. Carrying a coffin? Oh, I could never carry a coffin.

François. Be quiet, child, no one asks that you shall. (*To the* DUKE) Well?

Duke. Some of the women entered the Mayor's room and announced that he was about to die—but that he should be granted the honor of a burial.

François. Well, and did they kill him?

Duke. No—at least my brother did not mention that.

François. There, you see—braggarts, blusterers, clowns—that's all they are. Here in Paris they are yelling at the Bastille for a change—as they have done half a dozen times before.

Duke. Yes—were I the king, I should have put an end to it long ago.

Albin. Is it true that the King is so mild and gentle?

Duke. You haven't been presented to His Majesty yet?

François. The Chevalier is in Paris for the first time.

Duke. Yes, you are incredibly young—how old are you, if I may ask?

Albin. I only look so young. I am seventeen.

Duke. Seventeen—ah, how much lies before you yet! I am four and twenty—and already I begin to regret that I have lost so much of my youth.

François (*laughing*). That's good! You, Duke, you count each day lost, on which you have not won a woman or killed a man.

Duke. But one hardly ever wins the right woman—and invariably kills the wrong man. And so youth is lost after all—just as Rollin says——

François. What does Rollin say?

Duke. I was thinking of his new play that they are giving in the Comédie—he makes such a pretty comparison, do you remember?

François. I have no memory for verse.

Duke. Nor I unfortunately—I can only remember the sense of the words. He says that youth which is not enjoyed is like a feather-ball left lying in the sand instead of being tossed into the air.

Albin (*precocious*). Very true.

Duke. Is it not? The feathers lose their color and

fall out—it is better to toss it somewhere into a bush where it cannot be found again.

Albin. How do you understand that, Emile?

Duke. It's more a matter of feeling—If I knew the verses you would understand it at once.

Albin. I believe you could write verse, Emile, if you wanted to.

Duke. Why do you think so?

Albin. Since you came in, all life seems to flame up brighter.

Duke (*smiling*). Indeed?

François. Will you not sit down here with us?

(*Two more noblemen have come in and taken places at another table.* PROSPÈRE *brings them wine and appears to be insulting them*)

Duke. I can't stay now—but I will come back later.

Michette. Stay with me.

Flipotte. Take me with you. (*The girls try to hold him*)

Prospère (*joins them*). Let him go, you are not bad enough for his taste—he's going to some woman of the street—that's where he feels happiest.

Duke. I'll return surely—I would not miss Henri.

François. Oh, just as we came in, we met Henri going out with Léocadie.

Duke. Yes, he has married her. Did you know it?

François. Really? What will the others say to that?

Albin. What others?

François (*laughing*). She is a great favorite.

Duke. And he wants to take her away from Paris—so I am told.

Prospère. Ah—so you are told. (*With a meaning glance at the* DUKE)

Duke. It is too stupid. Léocadie was created to be one of the world's greatest courtesans.

François. Who does not know that?

Duke. Could there be anything more unreasonable than to take a human being out of his or her true pro-

fession? (FRANCOIS *laughs*) No, I am not jesting now —a courtesan is born, not made—Just as is a conqueror or a poet.

François. You are paradoxical.

Duke. I am sorry for her—and for Henri. He should remain here—that is, not in this den—I would have him in the Comédie—although even there I feel as if no one could understand him as I do. I may deceive myself however—I often have that sensation where any artist is concerned who pleases me. But I will say, that were I not the Duke de Cadignan, I would prefer to be an actor —such an actor——

Albin. Like Alexander the Great.

Duke (*smiling*). Yes, like Alexander the Great. (*To* FLIPOTTE) Give me my sword. (*He puts his sword back in its sheath, speaking slowly*) Is there a better way to mock at the world? He who can show himself to the world in any shape he may choose is greater than all of us—— (ALBIN *looks at him in surprise*) Don't trouble your head about anything I may say. It is true only in the moment that I utter it. Au revoir.

Michette. Give me a kiss before you go.

Flipotte. And me?

(*The girls cling to the* DUKE. *He kisses them both, as they go to the door with him*)

During this:

Albin. What a marvellous man!

François. True—but the fact that such men exist is a sufficient reason for not marrying.

Albin. Tell me what sort of women those are.

François. They are actresses of Prospère's troupe. He's now the host of this wine-room. They never did much more than they are doing now, however.

Guillaume (*rushes in breathless, staggers to where the actors sit, breathing painfully, with his hands clasped to his heart*). Saved—I am saved!

Scaevola. What is the matter? What has happened?

Albin. What is the matter with the man?

François. Listen now, this is part of the performance.
Albin. Oh——
Michette and Flipotte (*joining Guillaume*). What is it? What has happened?
Scaevola. Sit down—take a drink——
Guillaume. More wine, Prospère, more wine. Ah, how I ran—my tongue cleaves to my palate—they are at my heels.
Jules (*starts*). Hush—they are at our heels, always——
Prospère. Come, tell us what has happened? (*Aside to the actors*) More movement there—livelier!
Guillaume. Women—where are the women? (*Throws his arm around* FLIPOTTE) Ah, that gives fresh strength again. (*Suddenly to* ALBIN *who is quite startled*) Devil take me, boy, if I thought I should ever see you in this life again. (*As if listening*) They are coming—they are coming. (*He runs to the door*) No—nothing. It is nothing. (*Back again*)
Albin. How odd?—there really is a noise outside, as if many people were hurrying past—do they stage that from here?
Scaevola (*aside to* JULES). He does that trick every time—stupid.
Prospère. Tell us why they are at your heels.
Guillaume. Oh, it's nothing of importance. But if they caught me it might cost me my head. I set fire to a house——

(*During this scene more young noblemen come in and take places at the tables*)

Prospère (*aside*). Go on, go on.
Guillaume. Go on? Isn't that enough?
François. Why did you set fire to the house?
Guillaume. Because the President of the Supreme Court lived in it. We've chosen him to begin with—we wish to teach the good house-owners of Paris that it is dangerous to have tenants who can send us poor devils to prison if they so please.
Grain. That is good—that is good.

Guillaume (*looks at* GRAIN *in surprise, then continues*). All such houses must be razed—three more such men as I am and there'd soon be no judges left in Paris.

Grain. Death to all judges!

Jules. There is one judge whom we cannot destroy.

Guillaume. I'd like to know who he is.

Jules. The Judge within our own conscience.

Prospère (*aside*). That's insipid, stop it. Scaevola, roar your loudest—this is the moment.

Scaevola. Bring wine, Prospère, bring wine—we will drink to the death of all the judges in France.

(*During the last words, the* MARQUIS DE LANSAC, SÉVERINE, *his wife, and the Poet,* ROLLIN, *enter from the street*)

Scaevola. Death to all those who now hold power—death!

Marquis. You see, Séverine, this is the way they receive us.

Rollin. I warned you, Marquise.

Séverine. And why should you?

François (*rising*). Marquise! is it really you? (*He kisses her hand*) Good evening, Marquis,—greetings, Rollin—you venture to enter here, Marquise?

Séverine. I have heard so much about this place—and then we seem to be out for adventures to-day.

Marquis. Yes, just fancy, Vicomte, where do you suppose we have been? To the Bastille.

François. Are they still making such a noise there?

Séverine. Noise indeed—it looks as if they intended to storm the prison.

Rollin (*declaims*).

> Like to the flood, that breaks upon the rocks
> In anger grim that his own child, the earth,
> Should dare resistance.

Séverine. Don't, Rollin—we halted our carriage quite close—it was well worth seeing. Great crowds are always magnificent.

François. Yes—if only they didn't smell so vilely.

Marquis. And then my wife insisted upon us bringing her here.

Séverine. Well, and what is there so remarkable about this place?

Prospère (*to the* MARQUIS). You here, too, you dried-up old rascal? Did you bring your wife because you were afraid to leave her at home alone?

Marquis (*with a forced laugh*). He is such an original.

Prospère. Have a care that you do not lose her here. These fine ladies sometimes take a fancy to see what a real vagabond is like.

Rollin. I cannot stand this, Séverine.

Marquis. I warned you, my dear—we can still go if you wish it.

Séverine. What is the matter? I think it charming here. Sha'n't we sit down?

François. Marquise, will you permit me to introduce the Chevalier de la Tremouille, who is also here for the first time? Marquis de Lansac, Rollin, the celebrated poet.

(*They bow to each other and all sit down*)

Albin (*aside to* FRANCOIS). Is she one of the actresses, or—I am quite confused.

François. Don't be so dull-witted. That is the real wife of the Marquis de Lansac, a lady of position.

Rollin (*aside to* SÉVERINE). Tell me that you love me?

Séverine. Yes, yes, but don't ask me so often.

Marquis. Have we lost any good scenes?

François. Not much—that fellow there is acting the incendiary.

Séverine. Chevalier, are you not the cousin of little Lydia de la Tremouille who was married to-day?

Albin. I am, Marquise. The wedding was the main reason for my coming to Paris.

Séverine. I remember seeing you in the church.

Albin (*embarrassed*). I am greatly flattered, Marquise.

Séverine (*to* ROLLIN). What a dear boy.

Rollin. Ah, Séverine, you never saw the man yet who did not please you.

Séverine. Oh yes, one—so I married him at once.

Rollin. And yet I fear there are moments when even your own husband attracts you.

Prospère (*brings them the wine*). Here is your wine. I wish it were poison, but I am not permitted to give you that yet—Canaille!

François. The time will come, Prospère.

Séverine (*to* ROLLIN). Who are those two pretty girls? Why don't they come nearer? As I am here I want to see and do all that there is to be seen and done. Thus far, I think it is most disgustingly stupid.

Marquis. It will be livelier soon.

Séverine. The street is by far the most amusing place these days. Just imagine what happened to us yesterday as we were driving down the Promenade de Longschamps——

Marquis. My dear Séverine, why mention that——

Séverine. One fellow sprang up on the step of our carriage and screamed into our faces, "Next year you'll stand up behind your coachman and we will ride in your carriages."

François. That is rather strong.

Marquis. The less said about these things the better, I think. Paris is in fever—it will soon pass over.

Guillaume (*suddenly*). I see flames—red flames—everywhere—high red flames.

Prospère (*aside to him*). That's a madman, not a criminal.

Séverine. He sees flames?

François. This is only preliminary fun, Marquise.

Albin (*to* ROLLIN). I can't tell you how all this confuses me.

Michette (*comes to* MARQUIS). I haven't said good evening to you yet, you dear old pig.

Marquis (*in embarrassment*). She is joking, Séverine.

Séverine. It sounds quite real. Tell me, little one, how many lovers have you had?

Marquis (*to* FRANCOIS). Is it not remarkable how the Marquise can adapt herself to any situation?

Rollin. It is indeed admirable.

Michette. Have you counted yours?

Séverine. I did—when I was still as young as you are.

Albin (*to* ROLLIN). Tell me, M. Rollin, is the Marquise acting, or is she really—I can't tell what is true and what is false here.

Rollin. Reality—acting—can you always tell the difference, Chevalier?

Albin. Why, yes, I think so.

Rollin. I cannot—and what I find so remarkable here is that the apparent differences are done away with. Truth dissolves into pretense, pretense into truth. Look at the Marquise now—see how she chats with those women as if she were one of themselves—and yet she is——

Albin. Something quite different.

Rollin. I thank you, Chevalier.

Prospère (*to* GRAIN). What was that story?

Grain. What story?

Prospère. The story about your aunt, the affair that cost you two years in prison?

Grain. I told you, I strangled her.

François. He's weak. He must be an amateur. I haven't seen him here before.

(GEORGETTE *comes in dressed like a prostitute of the lowest grade*)

Georgette. Good evening. Is my Balthasar here yet?

Scaevola. Georgette, come here and sit down by me. Your Balthasar will settle his affair all right.

Georgette. If he isn't here in ten minutes, he hasn't settled it right—he'll not be here at all then.

François. Watch her, Marquise. In real life she's the wife of this Balthasar she is talking about. She's

playing a low street-walker, and Balthasar is her bully. But she's really the most faithful wife in all Paris.

(BALTHASAR *comes in,* GEORGETTE *runs to him, embraces him*)

Georgette. My Balthasar!
Balthasar. That affair's settled. (*The others are quiet and listen*) It was hardly worth the trouble—I'm almost sorry for him. You should choose your people more carefully, Georgette. I'm sick of killing promising youth for the sake of a few francs.
François. Excellent!
Albin. What?
François. His phrasing is so good.

(*The* POLICE SERGEANT *comes in, in disguise, sits down at a table*)

Prospère (*aside to him*). You've come just at the right time, Sergeant. This is one of my best actors.
Balthasar. I must look for some other livelihood. On my soul, I'm none of your cowards, but this is hard-earned bread.
Scaevola. I believe you.
Balthasar. I tell you, Georgette, you're too affectionate with those young men.
Georgette. What a silly he is. I have to be affectionate to win their confidence.
Rollin. Her words are deeply true.
Balthasar. If I ever thought that you had any feeling —with another man——
Georgette. Listen to that! This stupid jealousy will be his death yet.
Balthasar. I heard a sigh to-day—and that in a moment when his confidence was quite won——
Georgette. I can't stop pretending all in a moment.
Balthasar. Have a care, Georgette—the Seine is deep—— (*Wildly*) If you deceive me——
Georgette. Never—never

Albin. I can't understand that at all.
Séverine. Rollin, that is the true philosophy——
Rollin. Do you think so?
Marquis. We can still go, if you wish it, Séverine.
Séverine. But why? I am beginning to enjoy myself.
Georgette. My Balthasar. I adore you—— (*Embrace*)
François. Bravo!—Bravo!
Balthasar. Who is that imbecile?
Sergeant. That is too much——

(MAURICE *and* ETIENNE *come in dressed as young noblemen, but in shabby theatre costumes*)

The Actors. Who are those?
Scaevola. Devil take me, but I believe it is Maurice and Etienne.
Georgette. Of course it is.
Balthasar. Georgette!
Séverine. What good-looking young men.
Rollin. It is painful to see how every attractive face excites you, Séverine.
Séverine. Well, what did I come here for?
Rollin. Then at least you might tell me that you love me.
Séverine (*throws him a glance*). You have a short memory.
Etienne. Where do you think we have been to-day?
François. Listen to them, Marquise, they are clever boys.
Maurice. We have been to a wedding.
Etienne. You have to dress up for that. Otherwise the confounded Secret Service police are after you at once.
Scaevola. Did you make a good haul?
Prospère. Yes, show us what you took.
Maurice (*taking several watches from his coat*). What will you give me for these?
Prospère. A louis for this one.
Maurice. I dare say.
Scaevola That is all it is worth.

Michette. That is a lady's watch, give it to me.
Maurice. What will you give me for it?
Michette. Look at me, is that not enough?
Flipotte. No, look at me—give it to me——
Maurice. Dear children, I can have that pleasure any day without risking my head for it.
Michette. You are a conceited little monkey.
Séverine. I don't believe that is acting.
Rollin. No, there is a shred of truth in all of it—and that's just the charm.
Scaevola. What wedding was it?
Maurice. The wedding of Mlle. de la Tremouille—she married the Comte de Banville.
Albin. François, do you hear that? I assure you these are real thieves.
François. Nonsense. I know the men. I have seen them act a dozen times. They make a specialty of pick-pockets.

(MAURICE *takes several purses from his coat*)

Scaevola. You two can afford to be generous to-day.
Etienne. It was a very fine wedding. The entire nobility of France was present and the King sent a representative.
Albin (excited). That is all true.
Maurice (throws money on the table). Here's something for you, my friends, to show you that we are loyal.
François. Theatrical properties, my dear Albin. We can have some of it, too. (*He rises and catches a few coins*)
Prospère. Yes, take it—you've never earned any so honestly before.
Maurice (holds up a jewelled garter). To whom shall I give this? (GEORGETTE, MICHETTE *and* FLIPOTTE *snatch at it*) Patience, my darlings. We'll talk it over. I will give it to the one who invents a new caress.
Séverine (to ROLLIN*).* Would you allow me to enter the competition?
Rollin. Séverine, you drive me mad.

Marquis. Shall we not go, Séverine? I really think——

Séverine. Oh, no, I am enjoying myself immensely. (*To* ROLLIN) Ah, it excites me so——

Michette. How did you get that garter?

Maurice. There was such a crowd in the church—she thought I was making advances——

(*They all laugh.* GRAIN *steals* FRANCOIS' *purse*)

François (*returning to* ALBIN). There, you see, they're only counters—are you satisfied now?

(GRAIN *attempts to steal from the room*)

Prospère (*catches him, speaks low*). Give me that purse at once—give it to me I say, or you will regret it.

Grain. You needn't get rough about it. (*Gives him the purse*)

Prospère. And do not leave this place. I have no time to search you now and you may have taken something else. Go back to your place. (GRAIN *obeys*)

Flipotte. I'll win that garter!

Prospère (*goes to* FRANCOIS, *throws him the purse*). Here is your purse; it fell out of your pocket.

François. Thanks, Prospère. (*To* ALBIN) You see what a respectable place we are in.

(HENRI *has been present for some time, sitting at a rear table. He now rises suddenly*)

Rollin. Henri—there is Henri.

Séverine. Is that the man you told me of?

Marquis. Yes. It is really for his sake that we come here.

(HENRI *walks forward in, with exaggerated theatricism. He is still silent*)

Actors. What is it, Henri?

Rollin. Observe his glance, what a world of passion—he plays the criminal from passion.

Séverine. I admire that.

Albin. Why doesn't he speak?

Rollin. He is in a trance—watch him now—he has committed some dreadful crime.

François. He is rather theatrical to-night—he seems to be preparing a monologue.

Prospère. Henri, where have you been?

Henri. I have just killed a man.

Rollin. What did I say?

Scaevola. Who?

Henri. My wife's lover.

(PROSPÈRE *looks at him with a momentary flash of belief that it might be true*)

Henri (*looks up*). Yes, I have done it—why do you all stare at me so? These things happen—what is there so remarkable about it? You all know what my wife is—it could end only that way——

Prospère. And she? Where is she?

François. See how the host appears to believe it. That makes it seem so real—— (*Noise outside, not too loud*)

Jules. What noise is that?

Marquis. Do you hear it, Séverine?

Rollin. It sounds as if troops were passing.

François. Oh, no, that is our dear people of Paris—hear them growl. (*There is a slight uneasiness among the guests in the cellar, the noise outside dies away*) Go on, Henri.

Prospère. Yes, tell us, Henri—where is your wife? Where did you leave her?

Henri. I am not alarmed for her; it will not kill her. This one or that one, what does a woman like that care? There are a thousand other handsome men in Paris—what does it matter?

Balthasar. So be it with all of them—all those who take our women from us.

Scaevola. With all who take what belongs to us!

Sergeant (*to* PROSPÈRE). Those are revolutionary speeches.

Albin. It is dreadful—those people really mean what they say!

Scaevola. Down with the usurers of France! Shall we wager that the fellow he found with his wife was one of those damned dogs who steal our bread as well.

Albin. Oh, let us go.

Séverine. Henri! Henri!

Marquis. Marquise!

Séverine. Oh, my dear Marquis, please ask the man how he discovered his wife's infidelity—or shall I ask him myself?

Marquis (*after a vain attempt at refusal*). Tell us how you found them, Henri?

Henri (*has been sunk in thought*). Do you know my wife? She is the most beautiful and the most depraved creature under the sun—and I loved her. We had known each other seven years; but she is my wife only since yesterday. In all these seven years there was not one day—not one single day, on which she did not lie to me—for everything about her lies, her eyes and her lips—her kisses and her smile.

François. He is a little declamatory today.

Henri. The old ones and the young ones; every one who interested her—every one who would pay her—every one even who desired her—could have her—and I knew it.

Séverine. Not every man can say that.

Henri. And yet she loved me, friends—can you understand that? Again and again she came back to me—came back from everywhere, from everyone—from the handsome ones and the ugly—from the clever and from the stupid ones—from the vagabonds and the cavaliers—came back to me always.

Séverine (*to* ROLLIN). If you could but understand that this coming back is real love.

Henri. Oh, how I suffered—torture—torture!

Rollin. It is heartrending!

Henri. And yesterday I married her. We dreamed a dream—no, it was I who dreamed—I dreamed I might take her away from here—away into silence and solitude—into the peace of the wide fields. We should live as do other happy couples. I dreamed of a child, too.

Rollin (very low). Séverine!

Séverine. Yes—yes——

Albin. François, this man speaks the truth.

François. Certainly, the love story is real—the murder is the fiction.

Henri. I was one day late—she'd forgotten one—otherwise—I believe—there wasn't one missing—but I found them together—and he is dead.

The Actors. Who? Who? How did it happen? Where is he? Are they following you? How was it? Where is she?

Henri (more and more excited). I accompanied her to the theatre—it was to be the last time—I kissed her—at the door. She went up to her dressing room—I walked away like a man who has nothing to fear. But scarce a hundred paces from the house—it began in me—do you understand?—a horrible unease—something pulled and tugged at me to go back—and I did turn and go back.—Then I was ashamed and walked away again—and again I was an hundred paces from the theatre—and again it seized and tore me—and I returned again. Her scene was over—she hasn't much to do—she stands a short time on the stage—half naked—and then she is through. I stood before her dressing room—I put my ear to the door and listened—I heard whispering—I could not hear the words. The whispering stopped—I broke open the door. (*Screams like a wild animal*) It was the Duke de Cadignan—and I killed him——

Prospère (who now believes it to be true). Madman! (HENRI *looks up, gazes at* PROSPÈRE *as if dazed*)

Séverine. Bravo! Bravo!

Rollin. O Marquise, what are you doing? The moment you applaud, you drag it all down to the level of an ordinary theatre—and the delicious shivery sensation is lost.

Marquis. I can't say that I find the shivers so delightful. Let us applaud, friends, and free ourselves from this spell.

Prospère (comes to HENRI, *during the applause, whispers).* Henri, save yourself. Flee for your life!

Henri. What—what?

Prospère. That is enough—hurry now—get away from here.

François. Silence there!—listen to what our host is saying.

Prospère (after a second's thought). I tell him that he must get away before the watch at the city gates have been notified. The handsome Duke was a favorite with the king—they will put you to the wheel! Ah, had you but killed that wretch, your wife, instead!

François. What splendid ensemble work!—magnificent!

Henri. Prospère, it is you or I that is mad now. *(He tries to read the other's eyes)*

Rollin. It is marvellous—we all know that he is acting—and yet if the Duke de Cadignan should come in now, he would seem like a ghost to us.

(The noise outside has been growing stronger for some time—the door is thrown open, faces look in—yells and shouts are heard—people press in at the door, led by GRASSET, LEBRÊT *following him. Shouts of "Liberty! Liberty!" outside)*

Grasset. Here we are friends—this is the place.

Albin. What is that? Is that part of the play?

François. No——

Marquis. What does this mean?

Séverine. Who are these people?

Grasset. This way, friends. As I told you—my friend Prospère has always an extra barrel of wine hidden somewhere—and we have earned it tonight. Friends—brothers—we have taken it—we have taken it!

(Shouts outside "Liberty! Liberty!")

Séverine. What is happening?

Marquis. Let us go—the mob is crowding in.
Rollin. How do you think to get out?
Grasset. The Bastille has fallen—the Bastille has fallen!
Prospère. What's that you're saying?—Is he telling the truth?
Grasset. Can't you hear? (ALBIN *puts his hand to his sword*)
François. No—don't do that—we are lost if you do——
Grasset (*staggers down the steps*). If you hasten, you can see a merry sight out there—you can see the head of our beloved Delaunay on the top of a tall pole.
Marquis. Is the man crazy?
Shouts. Liberty!—Liberty!
Grasset. We've lopped off a dozen of their heads. The Bastille is ours—the prisoners are free! Paris belongs to the people!
Prospère. Do you hear? Do you hear? Paris is ours!
Grasset. See!—See!—now he has courage! Scream all you want to, Prospère, you cannot come to harm now.
Prospère (*to the noblemen*). What do you say to this, you pigs? The comedy is over——
Albin. Did I not say so?
Prospère. The people of Paris have conquered.
Sergeant. Quiet there—— (*Several laugh*) I forbid the continuation of this performance.
Grasset. What imbecile is this?
Sergeant. Prospère, I make you responsible for these revolutionary speeches——
Grasset. Is the man crazy?
Prospère. The comedy is over, don't you understand? Henri, tell them—you can tell them now; we will protect you—the people of Paris will protect you——
Grasset. Yes, the people of Paris.

(HENRI *stands as if dazed*).

Prospère. Henri has really murdered the Duke de Cadignan.

François and Marquis. What's that?

Albin and Others. Henri! What does this all mean?

Prospère. He found him with his wife—and he killed him.

Henri. But it isn't true!

Prospère. You need have no fear now—you can shout it out for all the world to hear. An hour ago I could have told you myself that your wife was the Duke's mistress—by God, I was near telling you—you—Bellowing Brimstone, you—we knew it, didn't we?—you saw them.

Henri. Who saw them? Where were they seen?

Prospère. What does that matter now? The man's crazy!—you killed him—what more could you do?

François. For Heaven's sake—is this true or not?

Prospère. Yes, it is true.

Grasset. Henri, you must be my friend—hurrah for Liberty!—Liberty!

François. Henri—won't you speak?

Henri. She was his mistress? She was the Duke's mistress? I did not know it—and he still lives—he *lives*——

(*Strong emotion in the audience*)

Séverine. What is the truth now?

Albin. My God——!

(*The* DUKE *pushes his way through the crowd on the steps*)

Séverine (*first to see him*). The Duke!

Several Others. The Duke!

Duke. Why, yes—what is the matter?

Prospère. Are you a ghost?

Duke. Not that I know—let me pass here.

Rollin. Shall we wager that it is all part of the comedy? That mob there are Prospère's troupe—Bravo Prospère! It was a great success.

Duke. Are you still trifling here? While outside—

do you not know that things are happening outside——? I have seen the head of Delaunay carried past me on a pole—— Why do you all look at me like this? (*Comes forward*) Henri——

François. Have a care of Henri! (HENRI *hurls himself at the* DUKE *like a madman and buries his dagger in his throat*)

Sergeant. This is going too far.

Albin. He bleeds!

Rollin. This is murder!

Séverine. The Duke is dying!

Marquis. I am inconsolable, my dear Séverine, to think I should have brought you here just today.

Séverine. And why? (*With difficulty*) It was a rare chance—one cannot see a real Duke really murdered every day——

Rollin. I am still dazed.

Sergeant. Quiet there—no one must leave the place.

Grasset. What does the fool mean?

Sergeant. I arrest this man in the name of the law.

Grasset (*laughs*). We make the laws now, imbecile. Out with this rabble here! He who kills a Duke is the friend of the people—hurrah for liberty!

Albin (*draws his sword*). Make way there—follow me, friends.

(LÉOCADIE *pushes in through the crowd on the steps*)

Several Voices. Léocadie!

Others. His wife!

Léocadie. Let me in here—where is my husband! (*She runs forward, sees what has happened, screams*) Who did that? Henri?

(HENRI *looks at her*)

Léocadie. Oh, Henri, why did you do it?

Henri. Why?

Léocadie. Ah yes, I know—it was for my sake—ah no—no—say it was not that—I am not worth it—I am not worth it!

Grasset (*beginning a speech*). Citizens of Paris, let us celebrate our victory. Chance has led us through the streets of Paris to this agreeable resort—we could not have hit upon a better place—nowhere could the cry of "Liberty forever" sound more beautiful than beside the corpse of a Duke.

Shouts. Liberty forever!

François. We had better go—the mob is quite mad——

Albin. Shall we leave them the body?

Séverine. Liberty forever! Liberty!

Marquis. Are you crazy?

Citizens and Actors. Liberty—Liberty forever!

Séverine (*at the head of the group of aristocrats as they go towards the door, aside to* ROLLIN). Rollin, wait before my window tonight—I will throw down the key as before—we will have an hour of bliss—my nerves are deliciously excited.

Shouts. Hurrah for liberty—hurrah for Henri!

Lebrêt. Watch the dogs—they are running away.

Grasset. Let them go for today—let them go—they will not escape us!

CURTAIN

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